

GAMES MASTER

PS4 | XBOX ONE | WII U | PC | 3DS | PS VITA | ANDROID | IOS



20 YEARS OF TOMB RAIDER

» We celebrate a classic series – and ask the devs where it goes from here



VIDEOGAME MOVIES

» From Gears Of War to Tetris – the games that are leaping to the silver screen



PLUS!
WE LOOK BACK
AT THE FIRST
GENERATION

POKÉMON

SUN AND MOON

HANDS-ON AND BEHIND THE SCENES
WITH THE ALL-NEW EVOLUTION

Future

40 EPIC GAMES INSIDE!
THE HOTTEST PREVIEWS AND REVIEWS



THE LAST GUARDIAN
» Worth the wait?



RESIDENT EVIL 7
» We grill the devs



DESTINY
» Our Rise Of Iron verdict



GEARS OF WAR 4
» Does it live up to the legacy?

"A more serious
'Phoenix Wright'
experience"



Letter

since 1999 from Shimane Root Letter

Coming October 28th

PS4

PSVITA

©2016 KADOKAWA GAMES. Published by POUBE LIMITED

KADOKAWA
GAMES

poubé

"PS4", "PlayStation", "PSVITA" and "PS4" are registered trademarks of Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc. ©2016 KADOKAWA GAMES Ltd. Published by PQube Ltd Developed by
©KADOKAWA GAMES Ltd. All rights reserved.

“My first decree? Pokémon everywhere”

No, that's not a misprint - I really have swapped chairs this month, ready to keep things roaring along until a replacement is found for the irreplaceable Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman.

My first decree as temporary Man In Charge? Pokémon *everywhere*. Flip to our Sun and Moon cover feature on p44 and bask in ten dazzling pages of hands-on impressions, developer interviews, and expert GM insight. For more monster-catching, check out RetroMaster for a direct dose of Red and Blue-flavoured nostalgia, too.

Another classic series getting its due this issue is Tomb Raider. To celebrate its 20th anniversary, some of our favourite developers share their most memorable Lara Croft moments as we look at the past, present, and future of one of gaming's most enduring stars.

All that, plus our extensive hands-on with the long-awaited The Last Guardian, the final verdict on Gears Of War's return, the complete launch guide to PS VR, and much, much more.

Enjoy your GM!

Robin

Robin Valentine - Acting Editor

GET MORE FROM YOUR GM!



Online at www.gamesradar.com/gamesmaster



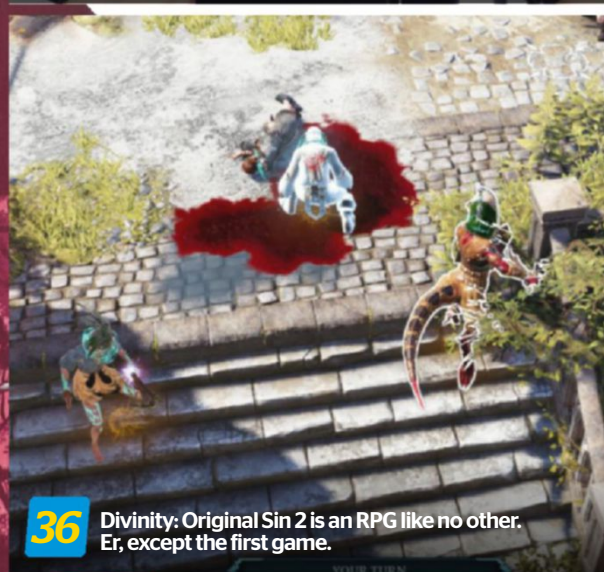
...or subscribe. See p92 for details.



EDITOR'S CHOICE
MY TOP PICKS THIS ISSUE



10 PlayStation VR is here and I'm fully on board - virtual reality is finally accessible and affordable.



36 Divinity: Original Sin 2 is an RPG like no other. Er, except the first game.

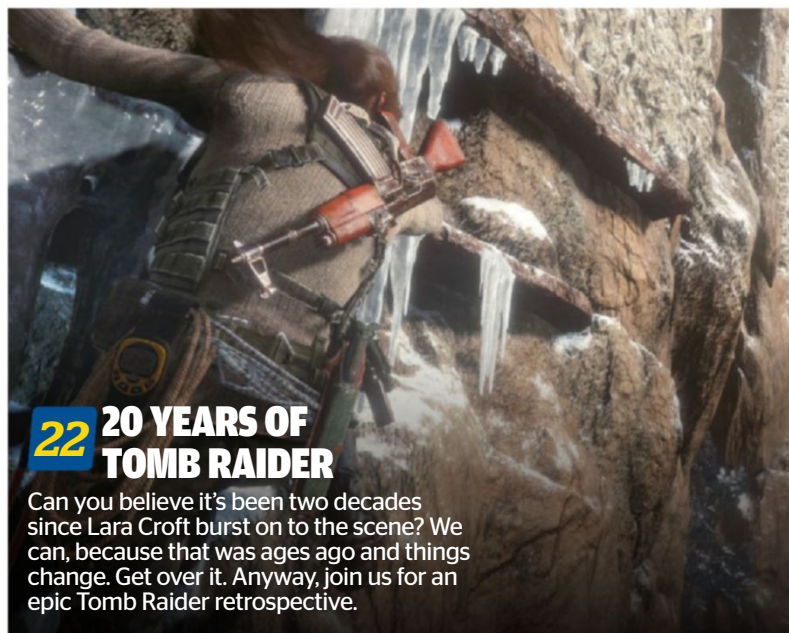


72 My favourite surprise of 2016 so far? How brilliant Dragon Quest Builders has turned out to be.



Contents

What's In Your Latest Issue?



22 20 YEARS OF TOMB RAIDER

Can you believe it's been two decades since Lara Croft burst on to the scene? We can, because that was ages ago and things change. Get over it. Anyway, join us for an epic Tomb Raider retrospective.

58 MAFIA III

We discover a '60s New Orleans/Bordeaux rife with good music, bad accents, and morally neutral crocodiles which you can feed your most hated enemies to. Animals: they are pure of heart.



44 POKÉMON SUN AND MOON

We visited Nintendo HQ and discovered it was full of Poké plushies! On the downside, we weren't allowed to have any. On the upside, we did get to play a load of Game Freak's latest.

GM Previews

28 THE LAST GUARDIAN

We won't believe it until we've seen it. Actually, we've played it, and we still can't quite believe it. Is this a dream?

32 KILLING FLOOR 2

You don't kill floors so much as Zeds in this frantic co-op shooter, and you don't use floor polish so much as guns.

36 DIVINITY: ORIGINAL SIN 2

Gods are dead and everything's on fire in this co-op RPG. Also you can eat people and steal their memories.

38 RESIDENT EVIL 7: BIOHAZARD

You are cordially invited to dinner. Please bring a bottle of wine and all your fingers. Your tasty little fingers.

40 THE FALL PART 2: UNBOUND

Control a malfunctioning AI in a dark sci-fi world and go the way of all machine intelligences: bonkers.

GM Reviews

62 FORZA HORIZON 3

Strewth! And other less stereotypical exclamations abound in our review of this Aussie racer.

64 MARIO PARTY: STAR RUSH

Ain't no party like a Mario party. He has a very good Spotify playlist and always offers to be the designated driver.

66 FIFA 17

With PES 2017 landing last issue, now you can finally find out which is the true footy king. 'King Footy', if you will.

69 WWE 2K17

It's the Attitude Era every day at GamesMaster Towers with Ben Griffin's foul mouth.

70 GEARS OF WAR 4

Xbox's ground-shuddering marquee cover-shooter returns chunkier than a steak and potato soup.

GM Regulars

06 FANBASE

A reader predicts gaming's next big innovation will be teleportation. Nostradamus or Nostranumpty?

10 UPFRONT

We've moved the sofas, shifted the coffee table, and made way for plenty of hot PS VR coverage.

54 INDIEMASTER

You're literally your own worst enemy in Echo, which pits you against an army of your own clones.

86 RETROMASTER

In honour of Sun and Moon, we return to the 1999 Game Boy classics, Pokémon Red and Blue.

90 CULTUREMASTER

A man has built a working Batsuit, complete with Batarangs and a flamethrower. We speak to him. Carefully.

Team GM

Meet The Magazine's Makers!



Future plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA
Tel 01225 442244 Fax 01225 732275 Email gamesmaster@futurenet.com
Web www.gamesradar.com/gamesmaster

EDITORIAL

Acting Editor Robin Valentine
Art Editor Rob Crossland
Senior Staff Writer Ben Griffin

CONTRIBUTORS

Keith Andrew, Louise Blain, Matthew Clapham, Matt Cundy, Matthew Elliott, Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman, Kate Gray, Richard Grisham, Leon Hurley, Alex Jones, Daniella Lucas, Ben Maxwell, James Nouch, Simon Parkin, Matthew Pellett, Chris Schilling, Tom Stone, Chris Thurston, Ben Tyrer, Brittany Vincent, Ian Wilson

ADVERTISING

Commercial Sales Director Clare Dove
Senior Advertising Manager Lara Jaggon
Advertising Manager Mike Pyatt
Director Of Agency Sales Matt Downs
Advertising Director - Games Andrew Church
Head Of Strategic Partnerships Clare Jonik
For advertising enquiries please contact Andrew Church
andrew.church@futurenet.com

MARKETING

Marketing Director Sascha Kimmel
Marketing Manager Emma Clapp
Subscriptions Marketing Manager Jemima Crow

PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

Production Controller Fran Twentymen
Head of Production UK & US Mark Constance
Printed in the UK by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future
Distributed by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue,
London EC1A 9PT, Tel: 0207 429 4000
Overseas distribution by Seymour International

CIRCULATION

Trade Marketing Manager Juliette Winyard - 07551 150 984

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK reader order line & enquiries 0844 848 2852
Overseas reader order line & enquiries +44 (0)1604 251045
Online enquiries www.myfavouriteitemagazines.co.uk
Email gamesmaster@myfavouriteitemagazines.co.uk

LICENSING

Head Of International Licensing
Matt Ellis (matt.ellis@futurenet.com)
+44 (0)1225 442244 Fax +44 (0)1225 732275

MANAGEMENT

Editorial Director Matthew Pierce
Group Art Director Rodney Dive

FUTURE PUBLISHING

MD, Magazines Joe McEvoy
Chief Financial Officer Penny Larkin-Rand
UK CEO Zillah Byng-Thorne

Next issue on sale 1 December 2016

Future Future is an award-winning international media group and leading digital business. We reach more than 49 million international consumers a month and create world-class content and advertising solutions for passionate consumers online, on tablet & smartphone and in print.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
www.futureplc.com
Chief executive Zillah Byng-Thorne
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Chief financial Penny Larkin-Rand
Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

© Future Publishing Limited 2016. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage.

Future Games: The First Choice For Gamers. This magazine is brought to you by Future Publishing Ltd, the makers of Edge, PC Gamer, Official Xbox Magazine and Official PlayStation Magazine.



We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from well managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. Future Publishing and its paper suppliers have been independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council).



THE MOST DEDICATED TEAM IN THE BUSINESS

We may be down a man this month, but never fear - Rob, Robin, and Ben each have the gaming strength of ten men. Which means we're actually 26 men up, if you think about it.



Ben Griffin

Have you ever met a man who plays every Pokémon game for exactly 150 hours each? We have, and his name is Ben Griffin. It makes him uniquely qualified to write about Sun and Moon in our huge feature - and also a big hit at the office Christmas party.

What would be your ideal VR game?
Dog Hugging Simulator 2017



Rob Crossland

Told he wasn't allowed to excavate underneath his house to build a full-size nuclear bunker, Rob's had to settle this month for putting up a massive shed at the end of the garden. Not quite as good for surviving the apocalypse, but it'll have to do.

What would be your ideal VR game?
BattleSheds



Leon Hurley

Our regular Early Access reporter now demands everything he experiences be only partially finished - his meals, undercooked; his hair, only cut on one side; his wine, unfermented; his outfits, without trousers. Oh, hold on, he's just been arrested.

What would be your ideal VR game?
Skyrim VR



Louise Blain

We're starting to worry about Louise - she's spent so many evenings in VR this month that she's increasingly struggling to tell reality from videogames. Or at least, we assume that's why she keeps hitting Ben on the head and shouting "critical hit!"

What would be your ideal VR game?
They already made Batman VR...



Just when you think games can't possibly get any more graphically impressive, along comes a title such as *Uncharted 4* to blow you away.



CONTACT US

Email gamesmaster@futurenet.com

Twitter www.twitter.com/gamesmaster

Facebook www.facebook.com/officialgamesmaster

Web www.gamesradar.com/gamesmaster

Post GamesMaster, Future, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1AU, UK

Teleport side

Just the other day I was sitting back with a Nintendo 3DS in my left hand and an Xbox 360 controller in my right, trying to play two games at once, when it suddenly dawned on me that every single thing I have dreamt of in terms of gaming has come true.

I'll explain. It all started back with the Atari 2600 when I would dream of less chunky graphics and sound that didn't sound like a spectrum of differently pitched farts - then I was rewarded with the Amiga, which accomplished all that and more. But then I wished for, say, photorealistic graphics and full stereo, even CD-quality sound, and I got that before too long.

And then I realised I may not be pushing it far enough with my fantasising. Virtual reality was next on the cards, and wishing for the day I held a bat in front of a 50,000 strong crowd at the MCG and hit a six off the final ball of a World Cup cricket final - and it seems this too might be achieved within, say, the next five to ten years.

Now, I am not mucking around - I'm going to tell you my next gaming dream. I urge your readers to brace themselves and get ready for this before too long: teleportation. That's right, stick a gamepad in the pod and it will get to your mate in Canada, or you could hop in and be teleported to your mate's house in Australia, where you can steal some of his games while he's in the shower and get home before he finds out. The opportunities are endless!

I am sure you will be most pleased to know that this indeed will be happening before too long because I have a 100% success rate with my predictions and everything else has come true so this has to be as well. Probably.

Robert Roemer, email

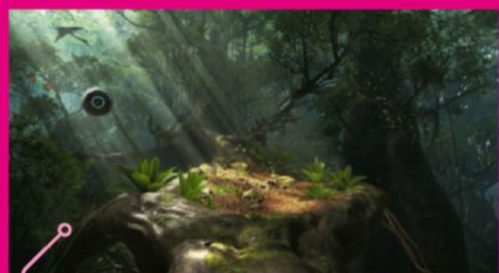
LETTER OF THE MONTH

Daniel asks, do we even need a new generation of consoles?

I love reading your magazine. Upon finishing any current edition I always look forward to the next one!

There's one thing that has crossed my mind recently. After seeing the massive leap in quality from last-gen to current-gen, my question is: do we really need a next-gen?

In my opinion, the answer is no. Games today are now so immersive that they are more or less interactive movies. Take *Batman: Arkham Knight*, for example. Weak story, but amazing acting, graphics, and gameplay. *Grand Theft Auto V*, great storytelling along with performances and looks.



A new generation of consoles would allow for more impressive virtual reality experiences.

Infamous: Second Son was absolutely photographic quality. To me, any next-gen console will only be a slight extension of current ones at most.

Daniel Climo, Facebook

Thanks for reading Daniel, glad you enjoy GM!

You raise an interesting question. Sony and Microsoft certainly seem to be moving into incremental improvement rather than full generational shifts, with PS4 Pro and Scorpio both acting as half-steps.

That said, we don't think games or consoles have peaked. We're confident that developers and publishers will always be pushing forward - at every generation, there have been people saying 'games will never get better', and they've always been proved wrong so far!

For more discussion of this question, check out episode 11 of the MasterCast, the official GamesMaster podcast, available at: <http://bit.ly/mastercast>. ■

WIN!

Got an opinion? Have even the barest grasp of words and how to put them together? The best letter bags a free mystery game!

*Don't forget to include your postal address and chosen format!



PIC OF THE MONTH



Water Mill school held its own comic convention - featuring a GamesMaster retro gaming area! Well, it's important to learn your history, right?

Got your own gaming pic you want to share with the world? Send it in!



Ant-Man for sure.
The smallest hazard could suddenly become the fiercest foe, like a house spider, or a daddy longlegs, or a puddle!

Ben Griffin, Senior Staff Writer

WISH LIST

Which superhero deserves a new game?

Squirrel Girl, objectively the greatest superhero of all time. It should be made by Platinum.
Bad Halloween Pun, @TGNProfessor

The Punisher. Because, The Punisher. I'm secretly hoping Rocksteady make it.
Simon The Martian HD, @MrFlibble81

The Defenders - Jessica Jones, Luke Cage, Daredevil, Iron Fist. Pick one and do the story mode, and you could have a four player horde mode too.
Adam Wiper, Facebook

Spawn. A game that is true to the comics in an open-world environment. Everyone loves an anti-hero, and the character has such a great origin.
Paul Jackson, Facebook

The Mask - imagine the gameplay mixed with the humour. It'd be very Deadpool.
Daniel Climo, Facebook



"NOBODY IS EVER GOING TO LET ME FLY A FIGHTER JET IN REAL LIFE!"

We can't help but feel that if teleportation is invented, it may have applications beyond gaming and petty theft...

The magic medium

What, to you, makes gaming so special?

The ability to interact with a rich narrative. With movies you sit there and watch it, but with games you actually get to be there.

Sean Mike Hollyman, Facebook

Escaping from real life! Who wouldn't want to re-enact Star Wars, or score the goal that wins the cup in FIFA. It's stress

relief, killing dragons in Skyrim, exploring planets in No Man's Sky. The list of what you can be is near-endless - a rock star, a soldier, or even an Italian plumber!

John Mitchell, Facebook

The hot takes.

Darren Hepburn, @DarrenJHepburn

They allow people to do things they thought impossible... nobody is ever going to let me fly a fighter jet in real life!

Adam Wiper, Facebook

For us, the interactivity of gaming is what makes it so wonderful and unique,

and gives it near-limitless potential. It's an honour to get to write about videogames month after month!

Quick sharp

I normally don't get magazine format games news (say that ten times fast!), but after my fiancé insisted on getting your magazine for a promotion to do with Final Fantasy XIV, I decided to have a flick through and see what you guys had to offer. After having a quick read I want to say a huge thank you for mentioning the Summer Games Done Quick in your Stats Magic of issue 307. I have always been disappointed at the lack of coverage events like this have, especially when you consider Games Done Quick have consistently raised over \$1 million for Doctors Without Borders and Prevent Cancer Foundation at each event.

I'll continue to buy your magazine if you agree to keep reporting on people in our community doing awesome things like this, deal?

Neil Harris, email

Deal! Glad you enjoyed the mag Neil, and you've inspired us to keep more of an eye on things like this in the future. You're absolutely right that these kinds of brilliant, positive community events should be celebrated! ■



YOUR TOP 5

MOST WANTED

The age-old question rears its head once again: which is cooler, swords or computers?



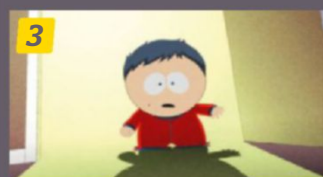
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD

Format NX, Wii U **ETA** Spring 2017
Turns out the answer is swords. Tunics and shields are also polling well.



WATCH DOGS 2

Format PS4, XO, PC **ETA** 15 November
Sorry computers, people still like you, but just not quite as much as swords. Try harder next time.



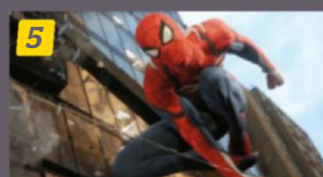
SOUTH PARK: THE FRACTURED BUT WHOLE

Format PS4, XO, PC **ETA** Spring 2017
DC and Marvel are quaking in their boots anticipating this super-roasting.



POKÉMON SUN AND MOON

Format 3DS **ETA** 23 November
Can you tell we're excited for this latest catch-'em-up? Head to p44 for our massive hands-on!



SPIDER-MAN

Format PS4 **ETA** Winter 2017
Spider-Man, Spider-Man, does whatever a spider can! Can he make a good game? Let's hope this one isn't lame!

OFF THE CHART!

The hot topics you've been gabbing about



- 40%** Riding your Original Fat Chocobos in FFXIV
- 23%** What you want from Mass Effect: Andromeda
- 21%** Voting for the Golden Joystick Awards
- 10%** Nintendo's move into mobile
- 06%** The rise of esports



POLL POSITION

Keeping democracy alive on our Twitter feed

Which is the best Destiny expansion?



Which is gaming's best modern football series?



SOCIAL GROUSING

Wisdom and weirdness from our bustling social media channels



Can't wait even two more days for the mag!!!

Hyllian Legends, @hyllian_legends



I can now ride gloriously into battle thanks to GamesMaster!

Hollie Bennett, @HollieB



Everybody's Tennis now available to download. Is there a chance of Everybody's Golf following suit? Hope so.

Jamie Cockshott, @JamieCockshott

MANIAC OF THE MONTH!



Thanks guys for the free game giveaway, but I can't even play it as I have destroyed my hand and a window...

Adam Ridley, @Adamsky2121



Someone needs to remake Red Card.

Chris Andrews, @Greave17



You asked on Facebook about what new features should be in Mass Effect: Andromeda, and I wrote "the ability to play as Kevin Sorbo". I received not even one like. Why is that?

Todd Yami Dox, Facebook



Mr Motivator should have his own game.

Colin McCloskey, Facebook



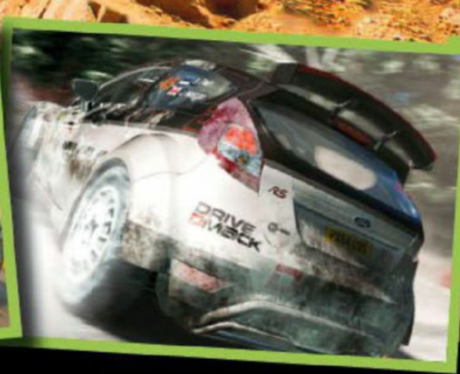
Anxious to see NX. Nintendo hardware is always an event!

Martin Dixon, @BunnySuicida

WRC 6



OUT NOW!



VISIT WWW.PQUBE.CO.UK/WRC6 FOR A FULL LIST OF RETAILERS

bigben



poube



PS4

XBOX ONE

WRC 6 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP © 2016 published by Bigben Interactive S.A. developed by Kylotonn Games and distributed (in the UK) by PQube. All rights reserved. An official product of the FIA World Rally Championship, under licence of the WRC Promoter GmbH and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile. Manufacturers, cars, names, brands and associated imagery featured in this game are trademarks and/or copyrighted materials of their respective owners. "WRC" and the WRC logo are registered trademarks of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile. All rights reserved.

Xbox, Xbox One and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. "2", "PlayStation", "PS4" and "PS4" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.



Is PS VR too pricey? Will VR horror games be too scary? Two GM writers weigh in with opinions.

THE NEW REALITY

It's here! From Move wands to wires, here's everything you need to know about **PlayStation VR**

Head to p78 to read our reviews of some of PS VR's best experiences - including both VR-optional and VR-only games.

 **Rot MK1**
READY

ON THE WAY

The biggest PlayStation VR games still to come



Resident Evil 7: Biohazard is our one to watch. Check out our full preview on p38.



Star Trek: Bridge Crew is a dream game. Team up with mates and captain your own version of the Enterprise.



Gran Turismo Sport promises full VR support, so be prepared for true racing immersion.

014 Flick magnet



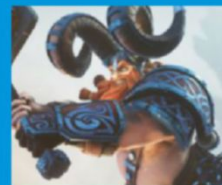
We round up the videogame-to-movie adaptations upcoming over the next few years.

016 Every boat counts



Ahoy! Our recon reporter tries (and fails) to build a seaworthy vessel in *The Last Leviathan*.

018 Jungle fever



Say what? Amazon is moving into games development - and it seems it's got its eye on esports.



W

e've heard it so many times - *'VR is the future of gaming'*. While we're certainly not convinced that virtual reality is going to become the core medium for all games any time soon, PlayStation VR's LED-covered headset definitely looks like a taste of exciting things to come. But what exactly is in that box, what do you need to make it work, and does it really feel like you're putting the future on your face? Allow us to break it down for you. Well, no, not literally - it'd take us ages to figure out how

to put one of these headsets back together again...

While £349.99 doesn't scream 'cheap', the PlayStation VR headset is the most affordable virtual reality option short of slotting your phone into a bit of cardboard. There are still some must-have items on top of the headset cost - the £39.99 PlayStation Camera is essential for the headset to function - but the total is still far cheaper than the £700 you'd need to shell out for an HTC Vive or Oculus Rift.

the PS4 itself - is powered with an adaptor, and also plugs into one of your front USB slots on the PS4. Two HDMI leads then finish the job. One goes from the box to your PS4, and the other to your TV to deliver what's known as the Social Screen. This means that friends and family can see a 2D version of everything you're experiencing in the headset. Finally, you can't use wireless headphones with PS VR. A 3.5mm

"THE PS VR FITS NICELY AND TAKING IT ON AND OFF BECOMES NATURAL SURPRISINGLY FAST"

But price isn't all PS VR's got going for it. Inside the box you'll find the most comfortable and lightest headset out of the three big hitters. A press of a button on the back strap will let you pull the headset to size, and a button under the visor allows adjustment of the lenses to form a snug fit to your face. Whether you wear glasses or not, the PS VR fits nicely, and taking it on and off becomes natural surprisingly fast.

Wand direction

In terms of wires, we're not going to lie, there are quite a few - but Sony has organisation down to a fine art. The headset plugs into an extension lead that is then slotted into the Processor Unit. This little box - shaped a bit like

jack needs to be plugged into the headset cable to experience the virtual surround sound created by the Processor Unit. Handily, there's a pair of in-ear buds in the box.

Some games don't need any more than the DualShock, but others do have features that are enhanced by using two Move controllers. If you don't still have any lying around from your PS3 days, a new twin pack is available for £69.99. It's also worth remembering that on top of gaming, you can still use all your PS4's features, just on a giant screen inside the headset. Called 'Cinematic Mode', you can play normal 2D games on this big screen or just settle down to some Netflix or iPlayer. In short, this is a brilliant start to console VR. We're in. ■



LEVEL 1

7 CUBES



“So, your PS VR is likely to cost you over £450 in total. Is it still worth it?”

Does Sony's headset represent a budget-friendly introduction to VR? Kate Gray isn't buying it

Remember when Sony announced that the PS VR headset would cost £350? In comparison to the Oculus Rift's £549 price tag and the HTC Vive's £802, it is the cheapest of the bunch - but you may well need to spend a bit more.

In order to work, the PS VR needs a PlayStation Camera. It's what Sony decided to use to track the player's movement. It's a pretty necessary piece of kit - but does it come packaged in the box? No. Anyone who wants to actually use their gear will have to fork out an additional £40 for a camera, otherwise they've just bought a very expensive blindfold.

Sony has mentioned during interviews that "some people already own the camera". Remember when Nintendo decided to sell the New 3DS without a charger, because some people already had one? Sure they did! But you can't expect your entire install base to have a piece of kit that makes the thing they're buying work, because what you're actually doing is punishing newcomers before they've even had a chance to get to know your product.

PS VR also works best with Move controllers. It doesn't require them -

you can play pretty much as well with a standard DualShock 4 controller - but if you really want to immerse yourself in VR, which you probably do considering the price you just paid for the headset, then Move controllers are just that little bit more like using your actual hands. However, a pair of Move controllers will set you back about £70 new.

Back to reality

So, when you add these extra bits and bobs into the equation, your PS VR is

likely to cost over £450 in total, and another £300-350 on top of that if you need a PS4, too. Is it still worth it? VR is the new frontier, and just about everyone's doing it. There certainly are some interesting titles at launch - like SuperHyperCube, a puzzle game that requires spatial reasoning, like a VR arcade game, or Robinson: The Journey, which has you crash-landing on and exploring an alien planet.

However, some of the line-up feel more like tech demos. We're still working around the limitations of VR, so there are a lot of static games that involve archery, flying, driving, and shooting - games that are fun to explore in a new way, but ultimately don't offer the richness of experience we find on a console.

VR has a long way to go before it's in every home. It's currently prohibitively expensive, and the games it offers are not all must-haves just yet. Give it a few years, though, and maybe, just maybe, we'll all be in the virtual space. ■

“WHAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY DOING IS PUNISHING NEWCOMERS BEFORE THEY GET TO KNOW YOUR PRODUCT”

STATS MAGIC The gaming month in facts and figures

40

How many times more copies FIFA 17 sold than Pro Evolution Soccer 2017 in its launch week. Ouch.

190

How much (in pounds) it'll cost if you want a pair of the new Touch motion controllers for Oculus Rift.

56

The current number of PS VR games scheduled to be available by the end of 2016. Plenty to be getting on with!

45 million

How many Tomb Raider games have been sold in total in the 20 years since Lara Croft first adventured her way into the hearts of gamers everywhere. Head to p22 for our anniversary celebration of the series!



“VR promises something different and truly nightmarish”

He loves horror more than his own family, but Matt Elliott still thinks it'll be too frightening in VR

We're entering an exciting time for horror. Not since the advent of home VHS, with its Driller Killers,

Love Camp 7s, and Zombie Flesh Eaters, has there been such a significant step forward in the process of beaming blistering unpleasantness directly into our lives. But there's a problem, and I know it sounds weird even saying this, but... I think VR horror is going to be too scary.

Now, this isn't me acting like a cabbagey moral guardian, monocle falling into my china teacup with practised outrage - plop! This is me speaking as a *huge* horror fan. Every year I store dark materials like a Mephistophelian squirrel hoarding some evil kind of nut, before binging on them wilfully during an October of

creeping terror. Resident Evil 2 is one of my favourite games of all time. I have a massive Hammer Horror poster hanging in my living room. I put cream on scones *before* jam. Basically, I'm evil shaped like a man.

Don't look now

So why be worried? Until now, most of us have only experienced terror through a lens. Unless you're one of those damaged sorts who goes to real life horror experiences to get taped up and covered in dog sick, you're always at least two steps removed from the horror, watching, quivering, but safe in the knowledge you're sat cosily remote from it in your own home. It's still scary playing something like Resident Evil or Silent Hill, but you always have the bulwark of it being experienced through a television. You're watching someone else be menaced by a monster, and the method of broadcast protects you. The television is a shield,

and if it gets too much you can look away. When horror breaks this sacred barrier, it's awful. In Hideo Nakata's horror movie Ringu, for example, the well-dwelling Sadako crawls out of the TV to terrifying effect. Once viewed, it's impossible to forget.

With this in mind, VR promises something different and truly nightmarish. Being forced to stare directly at something you fear is a vicious and damaging prospect compared to zombie dogs leaping through a window. The latter is a simple jump scare; the former the sort of half-imagined night terror that has you waking in the small hours and reaching for the light switch.

I can cope with the prospect of something like Resi 7, where the threat is a family of deplorables in a dilapidated mansion, but something like PS VR's Paranormal Activity: The Lost Soul promises a different kind of terror, far removed from the customary method of watching horror flicks with the lights off, or reading MR James in a candlelit study. I'll still play horror in VR - even if I never sleep again - but like VHS, it'll be many years and numerous moral panics before it becomes the norm. Be afraid. ■

“BEING FORCED TO STARE AT SOMETHING YOU FEAR IS A VICIOUS AND TERRIFYING PROSPECT”

GM MOST WANTED

What's most tickling the team's fancy this month



ROBIN'S PICK

For Honor

That meaty-looking melee combat has got me more excited than I've been for a multiplayer game in years. Slicing down crowds of hapless mooks before heading into tense one-on-one duels with other players seems like the perfect blend of power fantasy and precise competition. And that samurai vs knights vs vikings set up is like if Deadliest Warrior was actually cool...

PS4, XO, PC - 14 February 2017



BEN'S PICK

Little Nightmares

I want to be scared, but not too scared (looking at you, Resident Evil 7). This grim and grubby undersea journey from LittleBigPlanet contributors Tarsier Studios looks right up my alley, and has you climbing teetering furniture and panic-hiding under tables from fat chefs. It's nailed the haunting imagery - at one point you fall in a big pit of baby shoes.

PS4, XO, PC - 2017



ROB'S PICK

Battalion 1944

Battlefield 1 isn't the only historical multiplayer FPS that's piqued my interest lately... While this WWII shooter doesn't look to have quite the polish of its bigger competitors, there's a certain underdog charm to it that's got me and my multiplayer playing buddies excited to give it a try. Even if I will miss riding a horse into battle.

PS4, XO, PC - May 2017



SCREEN-AGE DREAMS

Angry Birds and Warcraft were only the beginning. Videogame movies are back with a vengeance. Prep your popcorn - here's what's on the way



Let's face it. Videogame movies don't have a great rep and there's good reason for that. We've got two words for you: Uwe Boll. Ok, that's a little unfair, but the German director's adaptations of games like *Alone In The Dark* and *House Of The Dead* definitely didn't help matters. Mainstream Hollywood has been almost diabolically

unsuccessful with gaming movies. This year's *Warcraft* was fine but a decade too late, Angelina Jolie looked the part in *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* but starred in a damp squib of an action movie, and the less said about Timothy Olyphant's *Hitman* the better. Yet a change is coming. After years of failure - except an acceptable *Silent Hill* - the film industry has noticed that those videogame things are, whisper it, still popular. Here's our breakdown of the movies that might just change the tide.

ASSASSIN'S CREED 1

Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard are taking a leap of faith on Ubisoft's open-world series

What better way to welcome 2017 than a trip to the cinema on the first of January to check out Michael Fassbender in action as both Spanish Inquisition-battling assassin, Aguilar, and his modern day descendant, Callum Lynch. Coming straight from his work on *Macbeth*, and bringing his stars with him, director Justin Kurzel has picked up the mission for making *Assassin's Creed* a movie that everyone can get into, regardless of their knowledge of the series.

This is an all new time period for the franchise, and Kurzel has his eagle vision on making it all as realistic as possible. Yes, that does mean all of the historical sequences of the movie are actually *in Spanish*, and a stuntman on set performed a wire-free leap of faith from 125ft. With a brilliant cast, including Jeremy Irons and Brendan Gleeson, and an interesting focus on the present rather than the past, the *Assassin's Creed* movie looks like it could be the best game-to-film adaptation yet.

THE DIVISION 2

Who better to send in to take back control of Manhattan than this A-list talent?

Zero Dark Thirty's Jessica Chastain and Jake Gyllenhaal of *Nightcrawler* and *Source Code* fame are in both starring and production roles on Ubi's adaptation of *The Division*. Ubisoft are clearly happy handing over control to the actors involved: "Attaching Jake and Jessica is part of our development philosophy of working closely with top talent from the earliest stages to collaborate on a high quality film," confirms Ubi Motion Pictures vice president Matt Phelps.

There's no info on who's in the director's chair just yet, but this will clearly have grim and gritty action on the menu as government agents work to rebuild New York post-viral outbreak. Plus, this gives us time to ponder if Gyllenhaal is actually allowed to be in another videogame movie after already taking on the titular role in 2010's *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*. Surely you only get one? Greedy boy.

GEARS OF WAR 3

Marcus Fenix himself joins Universal's movie line up for some chainsaw-swinging action

With more than 2.3 billion hours racked up by more than 45 million players worldwide, *Gears Of War* isn't just big, it's *huge*. And that means Hollywood wants a gun-packed slice. It's only surprising it's taken this long. In October, Coalition studio head Rod Fergusson announced that it had given the shooter's movie rights to Universal Pictures. There's no director or stars attached to the project just yet, but Scott Stuber, a producer on the *Ted* series, and Dylan Clark, producer on the new *Planet Of The Apes* franchise, are on production duties.

When asked about what he'd like the tone of the movie to be, Rod Fergusson has cited his love for Marvel, especially *The Avengers* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. He says their balance of serious moments, action, and comedy would be just right for the series. Plus, just like *Assassin's Creed*, this is going to take ideas and characters from the games to create something entirely new. Time for some fresh blood.

TOMB RAIDER 4

Lara might finally be getting the movie she deserves with a brand new reboot

If anyone can fill Angelina Jolie's boots, it's probably Ex Machina's Alicia Vikander, so it's a good thing she's taking on the role of Lara in the new *Tomb Raider* movie. Directed by Norwegian director Roar Uthaug, who made brilliant destruction fest *The Wave*, this new version has been inspired by Miss Croft's story in the 2013 game. Vikander has admitted that she played the games when she was growing up, despite not being allowed to by her parents - rebel - and revealed that she definitely considers this as an origin story for Lara.

Thankfully, Uthaug isn't planning to make the same mistakes as the 2001 movie. He's focussing on the character of Lara, rather than just her ability to dual-wield pistols, and says he'll bring his "Norwegian sensibilities" to the franchise. Whatever that means, we're just glad we won't have to stress about seeing all those death scenes. No more guilt ridden QTES.



1

RESIDENT EVIL 5

Your ultimate guilty pleasure, *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* is coming in February 2017

Admit it, you can't help enjoying Paul WS Anderson's *Resident Evil* movies. They're very big and exceptionally stupid, but there's an irresistible sense of theme park fun. The sixth, and yes, *final* movie stars Milla Jovovich once again as Alice – a completely invented character for the movies – who is joined by Jill, Leon, and Ada. Ali Larter is returning as Claire Redfield and, just to mix things up, *Orange Is The New Black* actress Ruby Rose is the latest addition to the cast.

As ever, the undead hordes have grown in number, and this is humanity's final hope for survival against the infection and the dastardly Umbrella Corps. Going by the absurd footage we've seen so far, where she has a motorbike and her superhuman powers back, Alice isn't going down without a fight. It's easy to be snobbish about the movies, but with box office winnings of \$915 million worldwide after five films, this is actually the highest grossing series based on a videogame ever. Yes, be afraid.



2



4



3

“THE PEOPLE INVOLVED ARE TAKING IT SERIOUSLY, WHICH IS A GOOD THING”

FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S 6

Screaming YouTubers rejoice – the smash hit horror series is Hollywood-bound

With found footage movies clogging up the box office like bloodied animatronics in a bathtub of cheese sauce, it's not surprising that *Five Nights At Freddy's* is getting the movie treatment. If you've managed to miss the game so far, it sees you play as the security guard in a pizzeria where you must watch CCTV cameras and avoid being hunted by evil, terrifying robot animals. *Paranormal Activity's* got nothing on this.

As is often the case with adaptations, rumours of the project's cancellation were rife on the internet, but the games' developer Scott Cawthon has calmed the situation on Steam. “The script is still being worked on,” he assures. “The people involved are taking the movie seriously, which is definitely a good thing!”

Monster House director Gil Kenan is in charge of the horror madness. At least the scheduled release date is the middle of 2018, so we've got plenty of time to prepare ourselves.



5



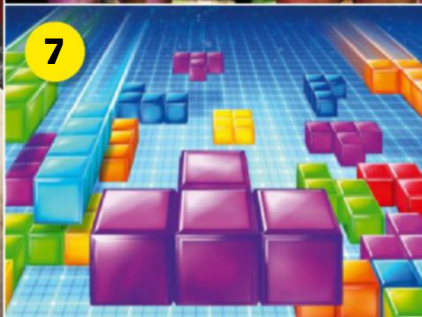
6

TETRIS 7

Block out some space in your diary for not just one, but three *Tetris* movies. No, seriously

Let's be clear. This is not the story of the development of Tetris in Russia in the 1980s – that at least would be guaranteed to be interesting. The Tetris project is billed as a sci-fi epic, and it's only the first of three movies. The tale that filmmaker Larry Kasanoff wants to make is apparently just too big for one movie. Kasanoff has previously worked on Paul WS Anderson's *Mortal Kombat* movie and had a credit on *True Lies*, so he's got something of an interesting resume already.

And what, exactly, can we expect from the movie? Apparently it won't be about blocks on legs, but that's about all we know. Casting is meant to be underway, although who knows who will want to be in a movie about blocks. Let's just imagine some pixelated tumbleweeds. Who knows, maybe we're being too cynical? But no, really. *Tetris: The Movie*.



7

HEADING OUT IN SEARCH OF THE LAST LEVIATHAN

It's about relating ship goals

Swapping roving for rowing, our reporter this month dons his best sailor suit and sets a course for *The Last Leviathan*, a Steam Early Access game about creating and battling ships on the high seas. It's a mix of physics, planks, cannons, and lots of hope because, as he soon discovers, floating is a tricky state to achieve when you can't say no to more guns on deck and have all the naval nous of a cheese sandwich.



2 MINUTES

Following the tutorial gives me a 'boat' that stretches the definition of the word. To my untrained eye it looks suspiciously like a plank with a sail on it. I name it the Blocky Rodger. My sofa looks more seaworthy, but I've got to start somewhere and this is what the game told me to build. Unfortunately, the tutorial doesn't mention anything about basic naval technique or the castles that shoot you from nearby islands. Within minutes I've beached my vessel and it's been blown up, having only spent about half my time above the surface of the waves. Using a sail isn't great either as the wind is never blowing in the directions I want to go in. The final opening insult happens when I investigate a small floating object thinking it might be loot. It's a mine. My ship does at least blow up well, so I've got that going for me.



5 MINUTES

After a few more run-ins with island-based forts that seem to be made of cannons and unhappiness, I decide the Blocky Rodger needs an upgrade. Firstly, the sails have got to go. While I appreciate the finer points of how wind works, it's slow and I have to either go in the wrong direction because that's where the breeze is blowing, or just go very, very slowly. The whole process is stupid. No wonder the Vikings went extinct if that's the only way they had of getting around. The sails are scrapped and the two biggest propellers I can find are bolted on the bottom. On launch, my ship flips and settles upside down and under water. Some fine-tuning may be required.



15 MINUTES

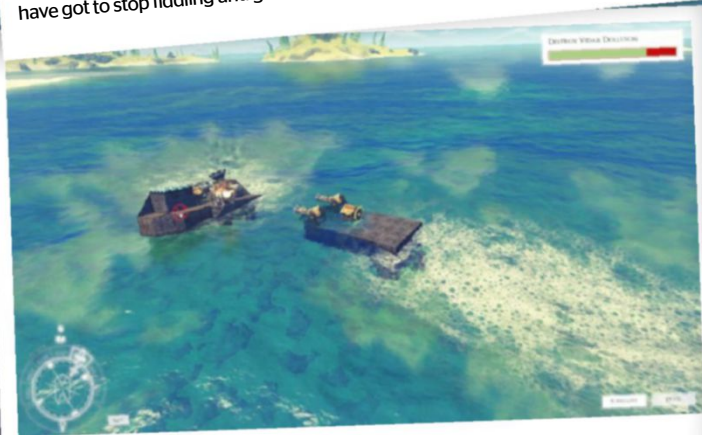
I'm still tweaking the Blocky Rodger mark two. The problem I have is that the engines are too powerful, flipping the front of the boat up every time I crank the throttle. I could maybe only use one engine, but that would be boring. Instead I have an unorthodox solution - I've not added any weapons yet so I bolt three large cannons on the bow. The result sort of works. As long as I keep moving, the thrust of the propellers counters the weight of the massive iron guns and it all just about balances out. If I do come to a halt, however, then the front of my boat sinks. I'm like a shark that has to keep swimming to live. A shark with guns and a really bad turning circle.





20 MINUTES

I've just about got the hang of controlling the Blocky Rodger 2. And by 'hang of' I mean I can tell when it's about to flip or dive underwater. It's still dangerously unstable if I go too fast. Or at a moderate pace. Or slowly. And if I stop the front sinks. 'Control' is probably the wrong word here. 'Aware of the danger' might be a better phrase - every voyage is a twitchy, button-stabbing example of crisis management as I try to keep the ship afloat and pointing at least roughly in the direction I want to go. However, while your guess is as good as mine as to where the ship will go next, I have got to stop fiddling and get out there. It's time to fight on the high seas.



25 MINUTES

The Last Leviathan is pretty feature light, even for an Early Access game. The core of it is shipbuilding, along with some combat, the ability to download and fight other people's creations, and a gauntlet to run full of mines and enemies. I try the combat because I didn't cover this boat in guns for decoration. Sure, they're mainly for balance, but I might as well shoot them while they're there. Fighting is currently quite basic. You patrol a small area looking for ships to blow up. Doing so earns coins and I'm hoping that'll give me more stuff to play with - currently the basic class has a low power rating that limits how much you can build outside of the creative mode.



40 MINUTES

Combat at first is a disaster. Because of me, not the game. My bobbing mess of a boat can't really steer all that well and because it spends as much time under the water as on it, I only have a few seconds to fire my cannons. I win a few rounds, but mainly through accidental ramming. Pressing shift lets you see the arc your shots will take, but because my buoyancy is such a transitory concept it's hard to line up a hit. My naval tactics evolve into a sort of drive-by ram attack with occasional cannon fire for the few seconds the guns aren't either pointing at the seabed or the sky. After a few muddled battles, it's clear the Blocky Rodger 2 is not up to the job.



1 HOUR

I decide it's time for the Blocky Rodger 3. Various combinations are tried out - ships with enormous keels for more stability, ones with guns at all angles in the hope that one might face the enemy at some point, but the winner is a design with the rudder flanked by two beams. Inadvertently, I seem to have discovered the perfectly balanced boat. It's fast, stable, and turns on purpose. Suddenly battles are a joy. The Blocky Rodger 3 can run rings around my various enemies. I've also mastered first person aiming from the cannons. It's not long before I become a terror on the high seas - circling ships as I strip away their guns first and then bombard what's left until it falls apart. After so long trying to win with the nautical equivalent of a wonky shopping trolley, it almost feels like cheating.



1 HOURS 30 MINUTES

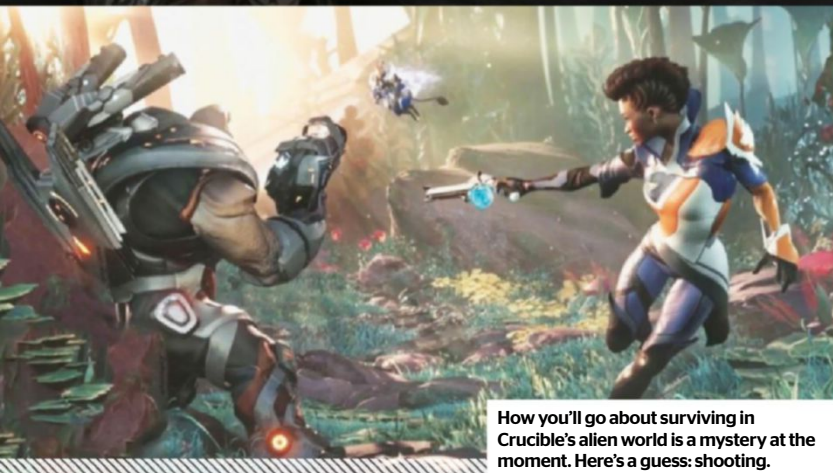
However, as much fun as it is to terrorise every ship I come across, I should probably try and do something else. The gauntlet isn't much a challenge, just nip around some mines and reach a checkpoint. Downloading other people's ships to fight is fun, but basically the same combat as before, so I decide to spend the last few minutes building the biggest, baddest battleship I can think of. Working on the idea that being hollow will be more buoyant kind of pays off as I create what I lovingly nickname The War Bucket. It can really only do forwards with a hint of left or right, but there are enough guns on there to blow anything into little pieces. Pressing 'fire bank' unleashes a four second round of cannon fire that runs the length of the vessel. That's the important stuff tested, now let's sink all the ships...

DROP ANCHOR

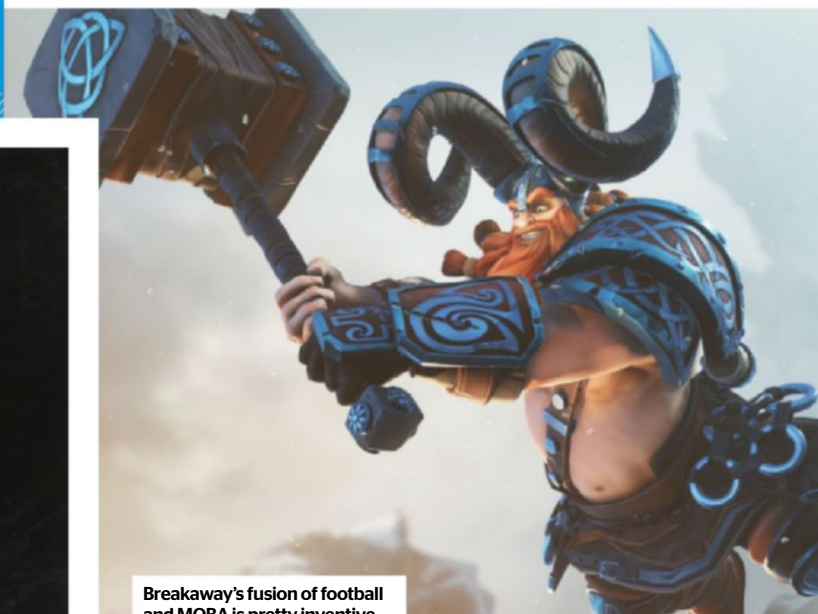
There's a good solid foundation here for what could be a great game eventually. But currently it's a bit light on content. That is reflected in its £6.99 price tag, but unless you just want to build ships you can't do a great deal. The promised battle modes and campaigns all sound good, and as essentially a demo to show how it could work, this is a promising but brief start. Definitely one to check out in a few months, but maybe not worth climbing aboard just yet.



NEW WORLD



How you'll go about surviving in Crucible's alien world is a mystery at the moment. Here's a guess: shooting.



Breakaway's fusion of football and MOBA is pretty inventive. Its art style, not so much.



ROCKET LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

Breakaway leads the charge as Amazon enters the games industry

You'd be forgiven for forgetting Amazon - the online shop turned cyberpunk megacorp - is making inroads into gaming. After all, they own Twitch, and now they've lifted the lid on three new games. The first of these is a MOBA called Breakaway.

Well, it's sort of a MOBA. In Breakaway, two teams of four players fight over a glowing ball (sorry, 'relic') and attempt to deliver it to the enemy goal. Physics and a third-person camera make it a lot more dynamic than a traditional isometric click-'em-up, but hero powers, combat, and levelling root it in genre tradition.

Imagine the love child of Rocket League and League of Legends and you won't be far off. It's self-consciously

spectator-friendly: Amazon are integrating Twitch streaming and actively courting the esports crowd.

The same is true for Crucible, a 12-player survival shooter where players are stranded on an alien world and only one can survive. Teams will form - it's billed as a six-on-six battle by default - but also break apart as the match goes on. A 13th player can even load in to manipulate the environment (and presumably improve the show for the Twitch crowd.)

The final reveal was New World, an MMO set in a supernatural take on 17th-century America. Player-built settlements will be the standout feature, but not much more is known at the moment. Sounds like ARK: Survival Evolved but with historical atrocities instead of dinosaurs. Not sure how that'll play on a stream, to be honest. ■

The Burning Question

Do you think esports have been a good thing for gaming?



Yes

I don't like watching it, but I can't see how it can ever be a bad thing.
Richard Cadman, Facebook



No

The more a developer focuses on esports, the less they focus on content and gameplay.
SI Newsham, Facebook

Visit www.facebook.com/officialgamesmaster and www.twitter.com/gamesmaster to take part in next issue's burning questions.

"LIKE ARK: SURVIVAL EVOLVED WITH HISTORICAL ATROCITIES INSTEAD OF DINOSAURS"

IT'S THE FINAL CUT!

How to build your papercraft arcade machines

A

nd so the great arcade cabinet giveaway comes to a glorious end. Your mini parlour should now be graced by Pac-Man and Galaxia (issue 309), Pong and Missile Command (issue 308), and Asteroids and Centipede (issue 307). Now it's the turn of Dig-Dug, and a customisable blank cabinet.

By now we're sure you can put your miniature coin-op replicas together with your eyes closed, but for the benefit of newcomers and the memory deficient, our handy visual guide will help you cut, fold, and ultimately assemble your team like totally adorable, paper-based Avengers. And remember, you can always share pictures of your handiwork with us. In fact, we demand it - show us your cabinet making craft skills. Peace out from papercraft arcade corner!



1 Start by cutting out the machines, being careful when you reach the narrow sections. Younger readers may want to ask an adult to help out with this bit!



2 Get folding! The outsides of the machines are relatively simple to spot. Just fold these back - ensuring the art faces outwards, of course!



3 See those white tabs? Those are for glue or your chosen adhesive of choice (sticky back tape works a treat should you fancy a trip to your nearest craft shop).



4 Before you stick your first tabs down, however, familiarise yourself with how the front of the machine folds. You need the controls to fold back, then the screen to fold back up.



5 It's time to start sticking. Be extra aware of how the marquee art at the top sits. The screen should be slightly tilted back into the machine.



6 It's starting to take shape, but this is the tricky bit. Make sure you've got everything where you want it, but if you're having trouble getting your mitts inside the machine to secure it all...



7 ...grab a long handled implement, such as a chopstick or, as we show here, a spoon, then poke the long end into the bowels of your machine to help push the tabs into place.



8 And you're done! All that's left now is to place it within optimal nostalgic side glance range!

NOT ENOUGH NOSTALGIA?

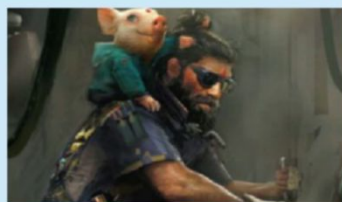
Has this got you in the mood for some retro classics? Alas, no matter how many 20p coins fill your pocket, you can only stare lovingly at these machines. Hit up Arcade Game Series on Steam to actually play Dig-Dug, Pac-Man, Galaga, and more!

Find it at: <http://bit.ly/gmdigdig>



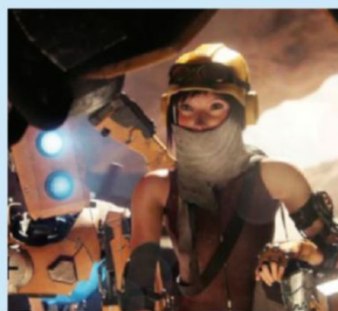
ALIEN INVASION

We hailed it as "an instant classic" and walloped it with a honking great 95% in our review of the PC version (issue 301), so PS4 and Xbox One gamers should be dancing in the streets now that strategy masterpiece XCOM 2 has landed on consoles. And by 'dancing in the streets' we obviously mean 'sitting on the sofa and playing XCOM 2'.



MAKIN' BACON

After a few frustrating years of 'yes it is' and 'no it isn't', Beyond Good & Evil 2 has been officially confirmed as 100% 'yes it is'. In a post on the BG&E Facebook page, publisher Ubisoft confirmed series creator Michel Ancel is working on the game with its Montpellier studio. No solid info on the talking pig yet, though...



FAR EDEN PROJECT

Efforts to improve the promising but technically flawed ReCore continue post-release with a series of updates to tackle key issues such as the utterly crippling loading times. In addition, Xbox One and PC players can sample the game's first 30-minutes via a recently released free demo. So, like, give it a whirl.



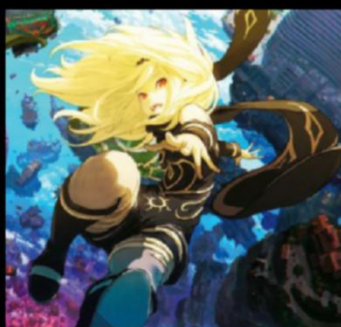
UNLIMITED POWER

Good news for subscribers to EA's Xbox One exclusive EA Access: Star Wars Battlefront will be added to the service by the end of the year. In other words, if you're a paid-up member of EA Access you'll be able to play the game whenever you want for no extra charge. Mirror's Edge Catalyst and UFC 2 will also be made available. Not bad at all.

Topping the leaderboard this issue



WIN
LOSE



WHAT'S THE RUSH?

The Sony trend of delaying its first-party titles continues with Gravity Rush 2, which has been pushed back to 20 January. However, it's not all bad news. To soften the blow, the planned premium DLC will now be released as a freebie. The delay also means there will be one less game to buy during the end of year release frenzy. All things considered, it's actually not a bad win for this lose.



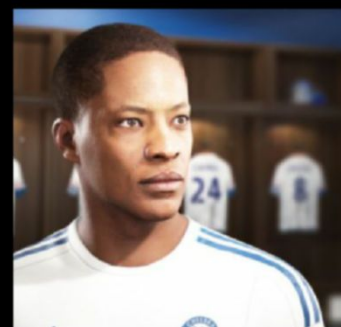
SKY'S THE LIMIT

Since it launched, No Man's Sky has been at the centre of an almighty hoo-ha - the result of player experience not conjoining with player expectation. After receiving complaints that assets on the game's Steam page were misrepresentative of the finished product, the UK Advertising Standards Agency has now begun an investigation. It's a sorry old tale for a game with so much potential.



LUCKY STRIKE

A storm of negative publicity has been swirling around the Oculus Rift ever since its co-founder, Palmer Luckey, was exposed as a financial backer of a hateful Donald Trump 'trolling' group. One of the most high-profile devs working on Oculus, Insomniac, released a statement condemning "hate speech", while SuperHyperCube publisher Polytron said it could no longer support the platform.



IT'S IN THE GAME

A real-life Twitter handle made its way into FIFA 17's story mode. The owner of said Twitter account, @CalWong, wasn't happy and tweeted EA to express his annoyance: "don't use real twitter accounts in your dumb game". Inevitably, a few gamers took offence and sent @CalWong some abuse. Sigh. Moral of the story: make sure a real person hasn't already taken your fake character's social media user name.



04/11

IT'S BLIZZNESS TIME

BlizzCon 2016 kicks off. This year's event takes place during Blizzard's 25th anniversary. Party!



10/11

FOR THE (PRO) PLAYERS

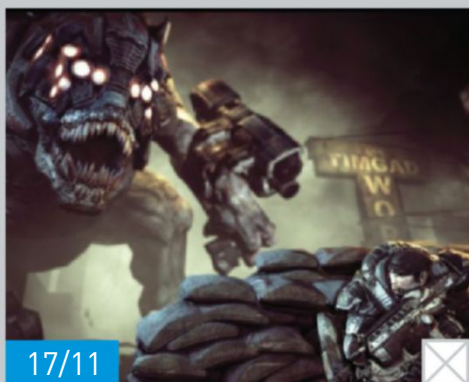
Is your PlayStation 4 not quite pro enough? Never fear - PS4 Pro goes on sale today.



11/11

CORVO-A-GO-GO

Celebrate Dishonored 2's release by not being seen by anyone for the entire day.



17/11

FIX-IT FENIX

Ten years ago today the original Gears of War curbed-stomped its way into our hearts.



Crucial dates for your gaming diary. If you only do one thing this month, eat, but otherwise make a note of these events...



15/11

TICK-TOCK-WOOF

We hacked the cyber (i.e. checked the internet) and found out Watch Dogs 2 lands today.



23/11

RELEASE THE BEASTS

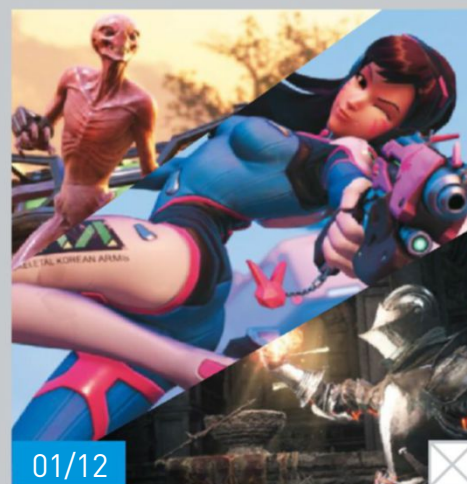
This day will go down in history as the day Pokémon Sun and Moon was released.



29/11

ON THE ROAD

It's been a long time coming (ten years!) but Final Fantasy XV has arrived. Finally.



01/12

AWARD-WINNING

Issue 311 of GamesMaster is on sale today - featuring our Game Of The Year awards!

INCOMING

Six big releases headed to a format near you...



01

Steep
Format PS4, XO, PC
ETA 2 December



02

Dead Rising 4
Format XO, PC
ETA 6 December



03

The Last Guardian
Format PS4
ETA 7 December



04

Gravity Rush 2
Format PS4
ETA 20 January



05

Kingdom Hearts HD 2.8 Final Chapter Prologue
Format PS4
ETA 24 January



06

Resident Evil 7: Biohazard
Format PS4, XO, PC
ETA 24 January

GM Feature

On The Cover!



RISE OF AN ICON

Celebrate 20 years of Tomb Raider with a deep dive into Lara's past, present, and future

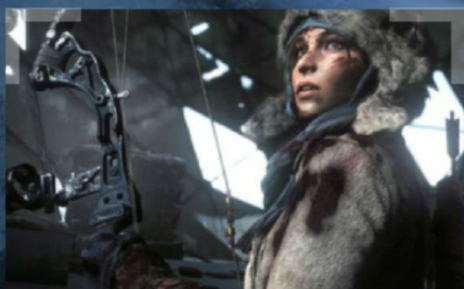
Since 540 polygons first combined to form Lara Croft's character model in Core Design's 1996 adventure, *Tomb Raider*, the restless aristocrat has charted countless pop culture frontiers, from fashion magazines, to rides, to music videos with U2. And it all started with a name: Laura Cruz.

But Core's parent company, UK-based Eidos, wanted a more marketable moniker. Her original artist Toby Gard

and his six-person team flicked through the phone book and cast votes: Lara Croft was born. Compared to cartoonish mascots of the day - Gex, Zool, Earthworm Jim - here was an in-proportion heroine (more or less) who walked, ran, jumped, climbed, rolled, swam, shot, and swan-dived. Her debut on PS1, PC, and Sega Saturn was a roaring success, rolling deft combat, deadly traps, and dextrous navigation into a fully 3D world, resulting in a grown-up system-selling alternative to Nintendo's Super Mario 64. A star was born, and Eidos quickly commissioned a follow-up.

GM Feature

On The Cover!



WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Rise Of The Tomb Raider's new PS4 edition

Lara's latest adventure sees her clash with a secretive conspiracy in efforts to reach the legendary city of Kitezh and uncover its secrets of immortality. When *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* arrived on Xbox One in November 2015, we called it a game that "courts sandbox sensibilities in a chilling, utterly captivating world" and said it "rediscovers what made PS1 Lara so special, and in the process digs up the soul of a gaming great". If you've got a PS4, you can finally see what all the fuss is about with this month's *Rise of the Tomb Raider: 20 Year Celebration*, which features all DLC released so far (including story expansion *Baba Yaga*, zombie-blasting mode *Cold Darkness Awakened*, and a plethora of outfits, weapons, and skins), plus all new features including an adventure in *Croft Manor*, a PS VR mode, co-op, a new difficulty setting, and more. Phew!



One of Lara's most notorious foes, the T. rex, got a fierce makeover in 2007 remaster *Tomb Raider Anniversary*.



Riding a wave of momentum, *Tomb Raider II* launched less than a year later, this time on PS1 and PC (it was, reportedly, too expensive for the Saturn's lesser architecture). A development team now double in size and able to playtest as they went smoothed a wonky camera, fixed a frustrating save system, and added larger outdoor areas that are now a series staple. Best of all: visual strides gave Lara a swinging ponytail. Eight million units shifted made it her bestselling outing yet – and second most successful of all time. *Tomb Raider III: Adventures Of Lara Croft* continued the high, with new stealth sections set in the Nevada desert, and well-crafted animations allowing our increasingly

athletic archeologist to charge and monkey swing through stages overflowing with peril (quicksand, piranhas, blood-freezing waters).

Sequel surge

Next came 1998's *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, Core's fourth game in four years – and, sadly, it showed. Although undoubtedly solid, a touch more stealth, a few new moves, and a smattering of UI changes that meant you could now combine items did little to distinguish Lara's otherwise forgettable fourth. Stagnation set in with 2000's *Tomb Raider Chronicles*, which gave Lara nowhere to go after being unceremoniously killed off, her story now recounted by funeral-attendees. Brave, or desperate? You can make the case for either. A new grappling hook showed glimpses of the daring platforming at *Tomb Raider's* core, but it failed to revitalise interest in a tired adventure on an ageing system, selling just 1.5 million.

Core retreated for three years and returned to the bright new world of PS2 bearing Croft's first fully fledged reboot in *Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness*. Ill-judged is an understatement: it was a half-finished mess with twitchy controls, muddled narrative, and bits in which you control a supernaturally-powered

TOTAL RECALL

The best *Tomb Raider* moments



"TR's Palace Midas. You had to rest three bars on Midas' hand to turn them gold. Pity the poor sap (me) who climbed atop the open palm: Lara's slow transformation into metal was harrowing."

Matthew Pellett, Editor, Official PlayStation Magazine



"When Lara busts out her dual-wielded pistols to defeat the final boss in the 2013 *Tomb Raider* reboot – it's the perfect nod to her distinctive combat style in the original games."

Iain Wilson, Guides Editor, GamesRadar+



"It was a happy day when I discovered knocking into Lara's dodderly old butler would make him fart in *Tomb Raider II*. That remains the pinnacle of the series. In my opinion."

Matt Cundy, Contributing Writer



From 540 polygons to north of 42,000, the technology behind Tomb Raider's protagonist has come a long way.



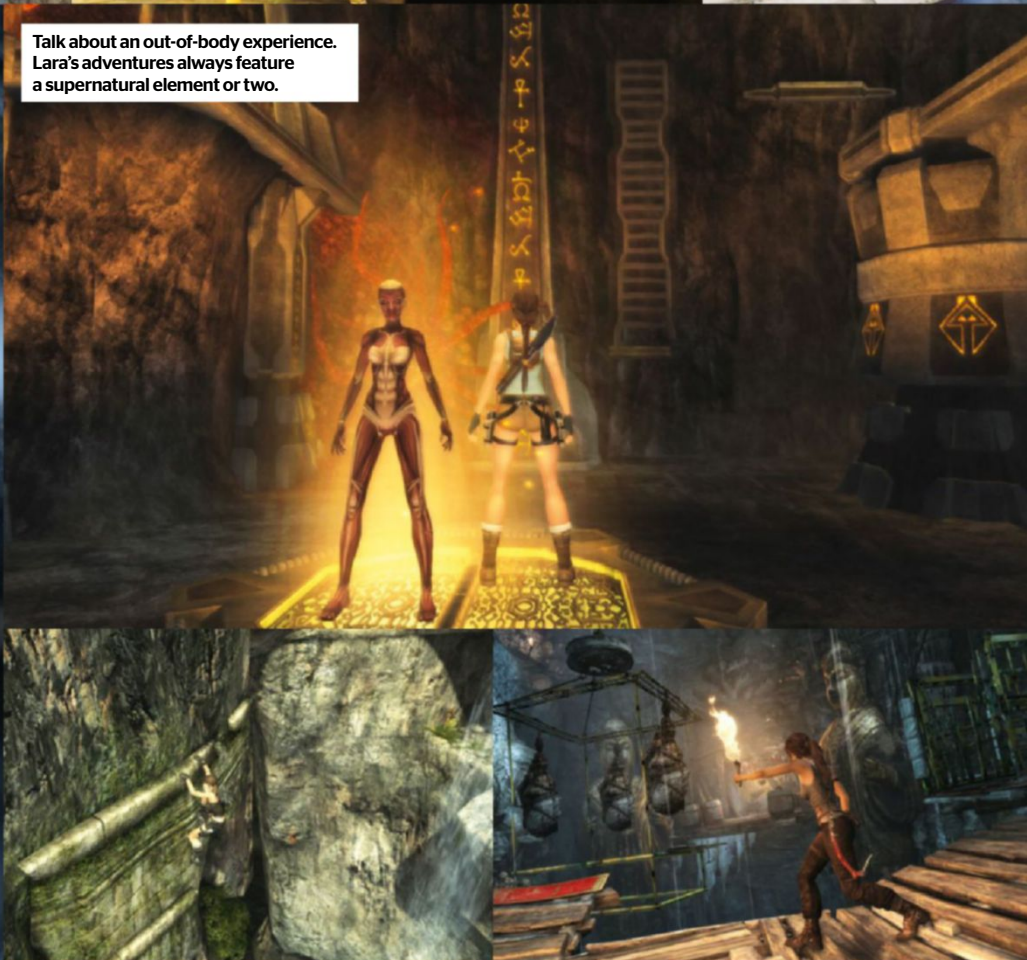
man with a grudge to avenge called Kurtis Trent. This was a critical low point, and Core's time was up.

But all was not lost. After letting the dust settle for a bit, Crystal Dynamics manned the helm for the 2006 corker *Tomb Raider: Legend*. The US-based Legacy Of Kain developer overhauled the engine for a new console generation, with believable natural locations replete with swaying foliage and outfit-dampening pools, along with punchy combat against reactive enemies. 2008's *Underworld* continued the new-look Lara's harsher battle against a more adversarial world, with ledges that caused loss of grip when wet, and epic multi-stage architecture puzzles that you at one point require a motorbike to traverse.

Next came 2010's *Guardian Of Light*, a more cognitive co-op dungeon crawler that engaged a different part of your brain. Its sequel, *Temple Of Osiris*, and a mobile spin-off, *Lara Croft GO*, were similarly effective experiments. But Lara's conquering of the modern day begins in 2013 with series bestseller *Tomb Raider*, which stranded the newly vulnerable Croft on a perilous island and tested her resolve against man and the elements, both equally crazed.

Its gritty bite bleeds into *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*, which takes place in a broader world brimming with sandbox possibility. This month it releases on PS4, packed with new bonuses. So, what have we learned? With jaunts to Paris, Gaza, Nepal, and even Atlantis over the years, survival is evidently about keeping moving and treading new ground. That's why well-timed reboots and spin-offs have kept the series delivering hit after hit for two decades, and why Lara Croft earns her place in the pantheon of gaming greats. ■ **Ben Griffin**

Talk about an out-of-body experience. Lara's adventures always feature a supernatural element or two.



LOOK, HUGHES TALKING

Chatting Lara with **Noah Hughes**, creative director at Crystal Dynamics



2013's Tomb Raider reboot starred a more vulnerable adventurer who fought, bled, and clawed for survival.

Q Tomb Raider as a videogame series has achieved long-running success. Why do you think it's proved so eternally popular with players?

A Tomb Raider is a perfect expression of the best parts of action/adventure gaming embodied in a unique main character. Lara Croft represents the promise of platforming, puzzle-solving, exploration, discovery, and combat. In short, Tomb Raider offers a variety of adventures that people love to have, with a character that people love to play.

Q Where were you when you first played a Tomb Raider game, and which one was it?

A I played the first Tomb Raider game in 1996, and my impression of games changed forever. I was

already lucky enough to be working in games, and we played Tomb Raider at the office. I remember being blown away by how impressive the world and character were, and I was left dreaming of all the things that could be possible.

Q So what's your favourite game in the whole of Tomb Raider history? And what is it about that game that makes you love it?

A Tomb Raider II is probably my favourite gameplay experience, but the first game made such a big impression on myself and the industry that it remains my favourite to this day, because it affected me so deeply at the time.

Q With that in mind, what's your favourite moment from any Tomb Raider game? Are there any special set pieces that still excite you every time?

A My favourite moment has to be the T. rex intro in the first game. Since that is probably a common answer, it is worth mentioning that the Midas death sequence was another of my most favourite Tomb Raider moments. It was such a shocking vignette that was a perfect fulfilment of a myth brought to life.

Q What, for you, is the core of Tomb Raider? What really makes a game a Tomb Raider game?

A Lara as a character and her skillset as an adventurer are the core of a Tomb Raider game. When you match this with a hostile world full of secrets that can only be discovered by a hero with Lara's skills you get a perfect recipe for action-adventure.

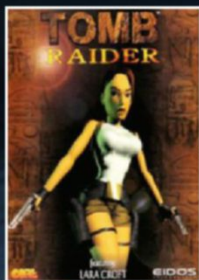
Q Tomb Raider has been rebooted numerous times. What elements do you think are so fundamental you have to keep in place, and what elements are more disposable?



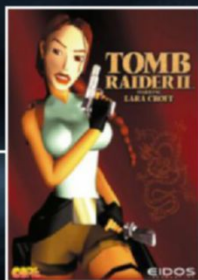
The original T. rex battle in all its blocky glory. Trust us, at the time this was terrifying. So memorable was the big green lizard that it returned in sequels.

TIME FLIES...

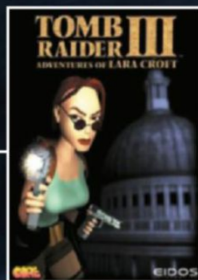
Charting the Tomb Raider, from 1996 to right now.



TOMB RAIDER
Released 1996
Format PC, PS1, Saturn



TOMB RAIDER II
Released 1997
Format PC, PS1



TOMB RAIDER III: ADVENTURES OF LARA CROFT
Released 1998
Format PC, PS1



TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION
Released 1999
Format PC, Dreamcast, PS1



TOMB RAIDER: CHRONICLES
Released 2000
Format PC, Dreamcast, PS1



TOTAL RECALL

The best Tomb Raider moments



"It's a hard call, but I'll go with the T. rex in TR II! It wasn't even on the main path: instead of zip-lining toward the end of the level, you could go down a canyon at the end of which there was a huge pitch-black cave, from which the T. rex would come out. That fight was pretty hard... and all this for a secret! But the completionist in me had to have it!"

Antoine Routon, Lead Programmer, Lara Croft GO, Square Enix Montréal



"It's the moment at the end of TRII where Lara's finished her insane adventure, is all beat up and dirty and is going to take a shower. She starts to undress, but stops, looks straight at the player, draws her shotgun, and asks: 'Don't you think you've seen enough?', and shoots the screen. It again just shows her awesome attitude, level of toughness, and really throws the player off. What a fourth wall break!"

Tymon Smektala, Producer, Dying Light, Techland



"The first room of the first game. You haul open a door on a snowy mountain side, and face a corridor, lined with poison dart traps. You can simply leg it through, or jump and dodge, but if you look at the floor, there's a line of wolf tracks that bend this way and that. And if you follow the line of the tracks, the darts all miss. Just a beautiful piece of environmental design, and turning the most simple mechanic - walking - into something intelligent and characterful."

Jon Ingold, Creator, 80 Days

A Our approach has been to keep Lara's core character traits as well as the core gameplay pillars intact. Her brilliance at archaeology and solving puzzles, her athleticism and climbing skills, and her resourcefulness and ability to fight brute force with mobility and cleverness. Although tone and interpretation changes, nothing is seen as disposable.

Q Lara Croft has gone beyond videogames and achieved mass market popularity. What do you think makes her resonate so strongly, and why is she such a magnetic and effective character?

A The concept of a world full of secrets lost to time, and a character uniquely capable of unlocking those secrets, appeals to humans on a very base level, I think. It represents a promise of adventure that calls to all of us. Beyond that, we can relate to Lara's perseverance. She is a hero that succeeds despite the odds, and her force of will is admirable.

Q How important do you think it is that Lara change with the times?

A The most important part of the Tomb Raider reboot was not to change the formula, but to re-interpret it for modern audiences. On the character side of things, this meant a modernisation of fashion

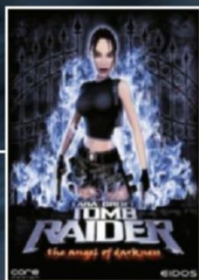
and characterisation, and on a gameplay level it meant a modernisation of gameplay systems and control paradigms.

Q When you look at the series as a whole, what do you feel is Tomb Raider's legacy?

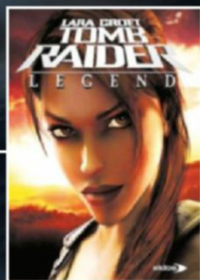
A I think Tomb Raider helped define a genre, has achieved a ubiquity of character design, and has remained relevant across generations in ways that are all part of its legacy as a franchise.

Q The last game, Rise Of The Tomb Raider, met with almost universal critical acclaim, suggesting that there's still plenty of life in the old girl yet. Where do you see the series going from here?

A We are very excited to see Lara challenged as a character in ways that continue to force her to grow and become closer to the hero that she is meant to be. We will continue to blend our commitment to modernizing the game experience with our passion for the things that made the franchise great from the start.



TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS
Released 2003
Format PC, PS2



TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND
Released 2006
Format PC, PS3, 360, PSP, DS, GameCube, Xbox, GBA, PS2



TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY
Released 2007
Format PC, PS3, Wii, 360, PSP, PS2



TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD
Released 2008
Format 360, PS3, PS2, PC, Wii, DS



TOMB RAIDER
Released 2013
Format PC, PS4, X0, PS3, 360



RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER
Released 2015
Format PC, PS4, X0



**“TOO OFTEN TRICO STANDS
LOOKING AT YOU WITH A
QUIZZICAL EXPRESSION”**



GM Preview

Future Hits Played Now!

Format PS4 **Publisher** Sony
Developer GenDesign **ETA** 7 December

THE LAST GUARDIAN

Ten years in the making, can the game match the hype?

Nobody makes videogames quite like Fumito Ueda including, it has seemed at moments during the past ten years, Fumito Ueda. After his first two games, *Ico* and *Shadow Of The Colossus* (the only two video games film director Guillermo del Toro considers to be masterpieces), the esteemed designer has been unable to wrangle his third game to completion.

Indeed, at times *The Last Guardian* has seemed as formidable a foe for Ueda as one of the 16 mythological giants that populated *Shadow Of The Colossus*. The

game has suffered an interminably troubled development, beset by delays, staff changes and even a switch of host console midway through. And so, predictably perhaps, another three month delay, just as the team appeared to be lunging for the finishing line. It's enough to test Shigeru Miyamoto's oft-repeated maxim that "A delayed game is eventually good, but a rushed game is forever bad" to breaking point.

The waiting game

But sitting down with the game - a 60 minute snippet from a couple of hour's into the story - in Sony's futuristic Tokyo office, it's clear why the publisher has opted to hold the game back for just a

Pets at home

Teaching Trico to be an obedient boy

Stained glass

Trico is, for some reason, utterly terrified of these colourful plates of glass, each of which is in the shape of some kind of evil eye. He'll point-blank refuse to walk past one until it has been smashed with a rock.



Iridescent liquid

Like a moth to a flame, Trico is drawn toward vials of this light blue glowing liquid. These can be used to lure him to interact with key objects in the world when it's necessary for you to both progress.



Hopping mad

Tap the trigger button on the controller and your character will wave at Trico and hop between feet on the spot. It's a useful way to get the creature's attention, although he won't always respond.



Pawing at doors

When not stubbornly refusing to do as it's told, the creature will sometimes use his paws or nose to point impatiently at objects which you need to interact with in order to progress the scene.



little more time: The Last Guardian is so close to something truly majestic and yet, without some fundamental fixes, remains in very serious danger of collapsing under the weight of its technical ambition.

The source of the game's problems and, when everything is working harmoniously as it should, its emotional wonder too, is obvious from the very first moment you pick up the controller. You play, as in all Ueda's games to date, as a young boy in a forsaken, tumbledown world. In Ico, you were accompanied by Yorda, a waif-like girl whom you had to help escape, leading her by the hand across a castle's dramatic, crumbling ramparts. In Shadow Of The Colossus you were accompanied by Argo, a long-suffering horse who would faithfully

animal, animated with the kind of precisely observed care and beauty you'd associate with a Studio Ghibli film (the way in which he squints when you clamber along his nose, or how he wobbles his backside while hunched in readiness for a leap), also has a mind of his own. And this is where the game's problems begin.

When progress is dependent on the creature, his tendency for disobedience tries your patience. A button on the controller is dedicated to getting Trico's attention - the boy will wave and holler, even hopping between feet in an effort to, for example, get Trico to stand in the right place. The animal is attracted to iridescent objects, so find one of these and place it where you want Trico to help out and, the theory goes, that he'll follow



"YOU MUST ROUTINELY PUT YOUR FAITH IN TRICO, LEAPING OUT INTO THIN AIR IN THE HOPE YOUR FRIEND WILL CATCH YOU"

carry you into places of towering peril. Here, your companion is Trico, a 12-foot, feather-covered, cat-like creature with small leathery wings, horns, and a sharp beak. Not that Trico needs much of an introduction - we're sure by now most readers are well acquainted with The Last Guardian's sizeable sidekick.

Trico patience

Trico, whom you find wounded, left for dead and in a generally sorry state at the beginning of the game, is more than a damsel-in-distress or mode of transport (although he is, at times, both of these).

He is, rather, an essential tool for navigating the overgrown world in which you both find yourselves, providing a tail up which you can climb to reach roof beams, a back along which you can walk as an impromptu bridge, a muscle able to hoist open heavy gates, and even a saviour, able to snatch you from a deadly fall, mid-air. This Swiss Army knife of an

the light like a cat sniffing catnip. Too often, however, he stands looking at you with a quizzical expression, perhaps turning his head inquisitively to one side, as if he understands that you need him to do something, but is at a loss as to what that thing might be.

And that's not all. Your store of patience is further tested by the camera, which tugs and pulls, seemingly doing its best to wrong-foot you at every opportunity. And while the boy is surprisingly hardy - misjudge a leap and he'll survive a hefty drop on to cruel cobblestones (you'll merely need to wait for 30 seconds or so, resting a hand on Trico, for your ankles to repair) - it can be frustrating, especially when you've figured out precisely what you're supposed to do to progress the scene and the only things holding you back are a mischievous camera and an animal who frequently behaves in a manner befitting of a stubborn mule.



The development team has tried to explain away some of Trico's disobedient behaviour by saying that, like a child, the creature has his own ideas and motivations.





From his snapped horns to his nervous attitude, it's immediately clear that Trico has been subject to some serious mistreatment in the past.

In terms of species, Trico presents a conundrum to natural historians, with the ears and whiskers of a cat, the snout of a dog, and the claws of a bird.

It's difficult to pinpoint where the boy, like Ico before him, is from. His robe and sandals are Graeco-Roman, his tattoos Maori, his neat bob of hair Japanese.

Still, at its most theatrical, *The Last Guardian* dazzles. Once you escape Trico's prison, you make your way across a series of rickety platforms, miles into the sky. A fall here would mean broken ankles, so you must routinely put your faith in Trico, leaping out into thin air in the hope and belief that your friend will catch you in his beak. He does, of course, but when, for the preceding 30 minutes you've been struggling to convince him to cross a room on cue, by the time it

comes to putting your life in the animal's paws, trust is at a paralysing low.

Good company

Companion AI has troubled many games over the years, from *BioShock Infinite*, which suffered similar delays reportedly thanks to the difficulties of making Elizabeth, your cohort throughout the game, do what she needed to, through to *LMNO*, a hugely expensive Steven Spielberg project unable to reconcile its

AI issue and summarily cancelled. *The Last Guardian*, with its melancholic score, wistful artwork, moving animation and a central relationship filled with tenderness, is so close to something marvellous that the thought of it being brought down by technical issues is too painful to entertain. When viewed through that lens, it's only too understandable why Sony would want to give the game an extra few weeks, and a few more, and a few more.

■ **Simon Parkin**

GM Instant Reaction

+ Ueda's team are unrivalled at creating a sense of wistful space and time, and *The Last Guardian* is arrestingly magical.

- The team's desire to keep the screen clear of clutter is certainly enviable, but navigation is currently cumbersome.

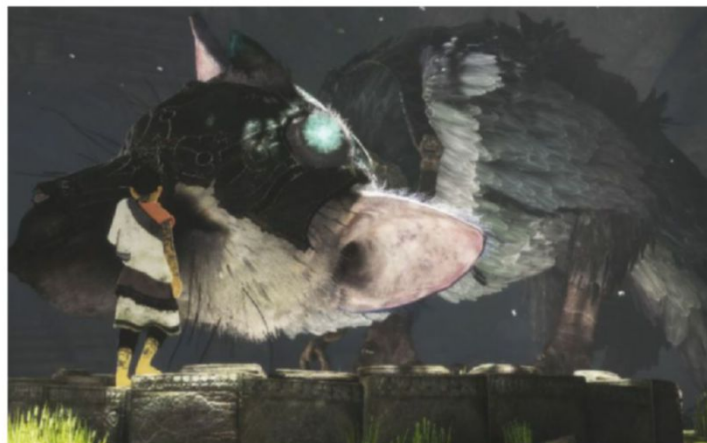
THRILL-O-METER



Trico's misbehaviour could undermine the artful potential.



The colour of Trico's eyes indicates what the creature is feeling, ranging from yellow when he's in a cautious mood, to purple when he's feeling anger and disgust.



Format PS4, PC Publisher Deep Silver Developer Tripwire Interactive ETA 18 November

KILLING FLOOR 2

When there's no more room in Hell, the dead will make good targets

Have you been hankering for some co-op zombie blasting like in the good ol' Left 4 Dead days? Well, after a long mutation from Steam Early Access to full release on PS4 and PC, Tripwire's FPS celebration of gore and guts is here to satisfy your hungriest cravings, upping the player count to six and giving you a chance to mould the perfect undead hunter.

Taking place across an overrun Europe, you'll work your way with friends – or on your own, if you're feeling anti-social – through hellish levels, taking on the

hideously transformed creatures in waves and trying to survive boss fights at the end. Just don't call the things you're fighting zombies. They're actually Zeds, you see. Totally different.

Class warfare

Before you take them on, however, you'll need to decide on a perk. This is Killing Floor 2's class system, defining what weapons and abilities your Zed-slayer will be able to utilise. Pick Commando, for instance, and you'll start out with the AR-15 Varmint Rifle, and gain a boost to weapon damage, whereas go for Firebug and you'll be a twisted firestarter, with a home-made Caulk 'N' Burn flamethrower and Molotov cocktails ready to roast

some fetid flesh. With plenty of variety on offer in the perks, every player has their style catered for, and teams can build distinct strategies.

Our hands-on drops us into the map Evacuation Point, which is half-docked ship, half-burning city. We're playing Survival mode, which – as the name implies – tasks us with getting to the end

of a set amount of waves alive. Unlike other co-op zombie shooters, this is one large stage. There's no rushing through to find safety in bunkers, as was the order of the day in Valve's classic co-op corpse hunt. Instead, you need to master the layout of the map as Zeds pour in from all directions. It makes for a rewarding mix of trying to create manageable areas

“WE FORGET TO BUY AMMO AND FIND OURSELVES RELYING ON FISTS. IT'S NOT LONG BEFORE WE'RE NO MORE THAN A ZED CHEW TOY”



There are a variety of Zed types, each with differing attacks and traits. They all share a common objective – to kill you.



Bloody chunks fly off your enemies as bullets hit them, enhancing the game's gory slapstick feel.



It's fair to say fire works well in combating Zed freaks. Just don't expect them to go down instantly.


 95%
complete

with your team, and the inevitable running and gunning when that doesn't go according to plan. Speaking of shooting,

the action here graduates straight from the university of ferocious speed and twitch, and the screen is usually teeming with things to mow down. Thanks to some impressive visual feedback, with body parts flying everywhere and Zeds blasted across rooms, guns never feel anything less than explosively powerful.

What you buying?

At the end of each wave there's the chance to buy ammo, armour, and new weapons with the money you earn from killing Zeds. You only have a set amount of time to find and use your purchases, however, forcing you into quick decisions about how to tackle the next mob of flesh-munchers. In one instance, we forget to buy ammo and find ourselves relying on fists - it's not long before we're nothing more than a Zed chew toy. This frantic system of shop and go adds a satisfying layer of pressure, and keeps things tense throughout.

While Killing Floor 2 isn't shooter of the year material, there's a sleazy charm to the way it revels in chucking you through the grinder of genetic experiments gone wrong. From its gloriously silly use of slow-mo to the legitimately grotesque design of its monsters, it's a rough and ready antidote to the slicker competition it'll inevitably face this Christmas. **Ben Tyrer**

GM Instant Reaction

+ Stylish shooting that combines well with some horrific-looking beasts to mow down with friends.

- Doesn't try too hard to add anything new to the undead formula, coming across as merely a fun mix of influences.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Grotty, grindhouse kills and interesting level design.

Know your enemy

Meet the Zeds you'd rather not

Slasher

He's got long, overgrown nails that must draw plenty of disgust from his mum. Not that he'll be too bothered - his lack of personal hygiene means he's able to easily tear shards out of unsuspecting players.



Bloat

The obligatory morbidly obese zombie. What he lacks in physical prowess, he makes up for in the ability to spew bile at you like a teenager who's learning the side effects of guzzling budget cider.



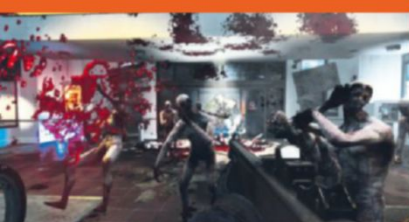
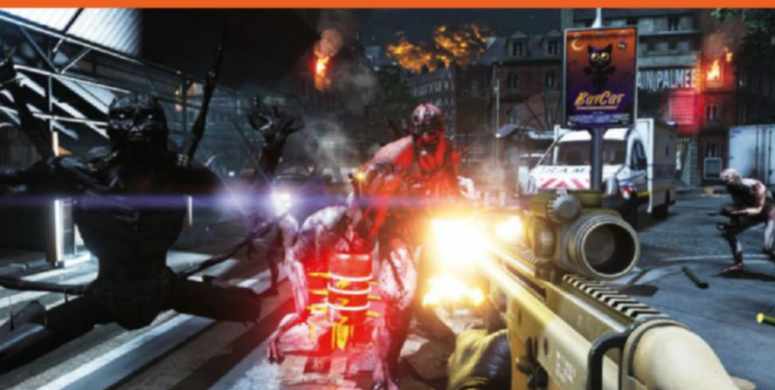
Scrake

Remember the chainsaw man from Resident Evil 4? Imagine he was wearing a metal muzzle and had his chainsaw attached to his arm. With eyes like his, you really don't want to see his mouth.



Fleshpound

Not a high minded reference to The Merchant Of Venice, but an absolute demon who has enough pointy objects sticking out of him to make Pinhead wince. One of the toughest Zeds to tackle.



These guys are Zeds. Definitely not zombies.

Versus Survival mode will allow players to take control of the Zeds. You know what they say - if you can't beat them... eat them.

GM Preview

Future Hits Played Now!

Format PC Publisher Stunlock Studios
Developer Stunlock Studios ETA Spring 2017

BATTLERITE

This arena brawler has the rite stuff

Two teams of fantasy heroes enter an arena, one team leaves. There are no respawns, cooldowns are short, and should the battle run too long then the arena will gradually constrict. Battlerite is a fast-paced arena combat game inspired by World of Warcraft PVP and MOBAs.

Like a MOBA, Battlerite is viewed from an isometric perspective but, unlike a MOBA, you move with the keyboard and aim with the mouse, so more like a shooter in that regard. Each character starts with a broad set of powers, with upgrades unlocked on a round-by-round basis. Think leaps, stuns, weapon power-ups, knockbacks, and so on. Overwatch is one touchstone here, but so – rather surprisingly – is Street Fighter. It's fun, fast, deep, and terribly tense. Rounds are very often decided by the first kill – a numbers advantage means a great deal.

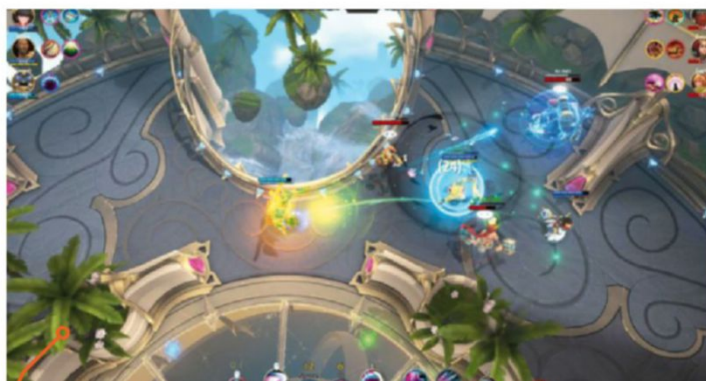
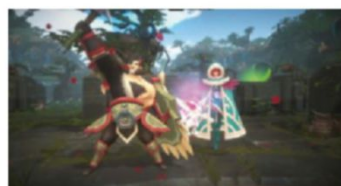
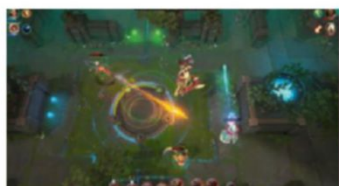
Win against the odds, however, and there's no feeling like it. This isn't a brawler where you run in, throw your life away, respawn and try again. Every life matters, so every ability, cooldown, and slight positioning decision matters.

All rite now

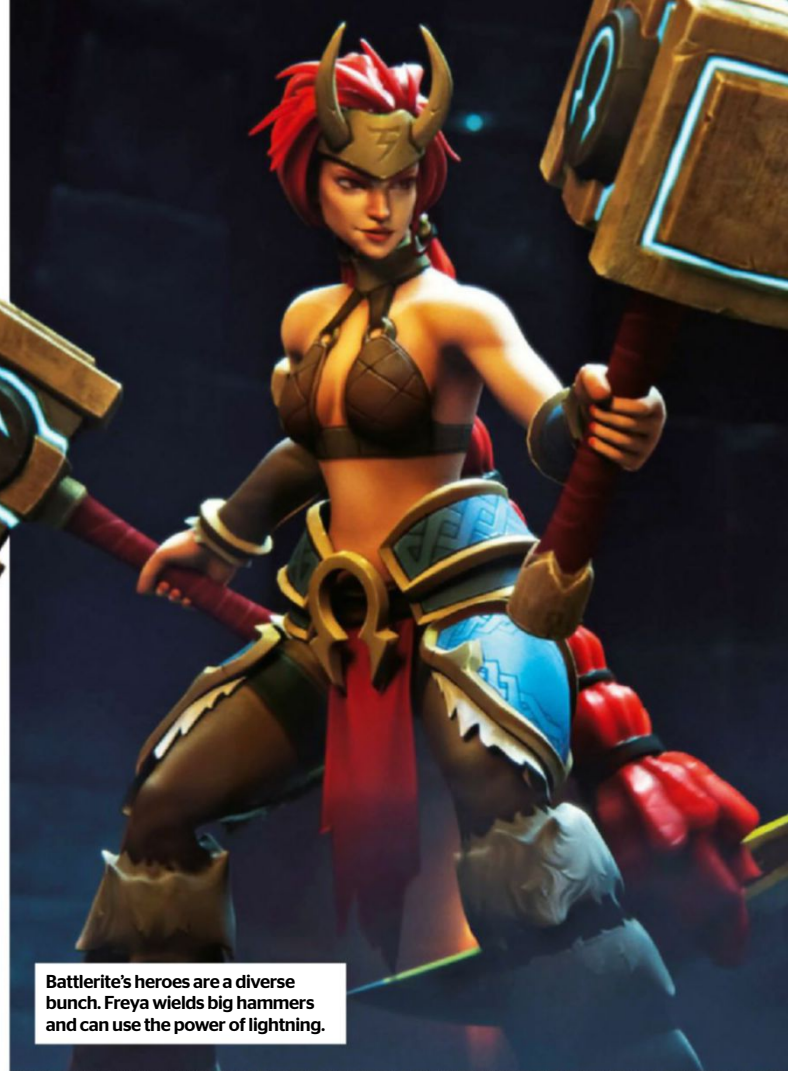
The roster of heroes runs the gamut from mages to frontline brawlers to assassins, with loads of interesting power combos and inventive visual designs.

Personal favourite Iva is a little old bag lady with a rocket launcher and a jetpack. Battlerite recently came out on Steam Early Access for £15, although it'll eventually be free-to-play. It feels remarkably finished, however, and the devs say this Early Access phase is just to test the game before launch. Word-of-mouth

buzz has already propelled Battlerite to the top of the Steam charts, and it's only going to get bigger. If you like League of Legends or Dota 2 but sometimes wish you could skip to the fighting, give this a try.



Prepare to learn lots of status effects and conditional rules, but when it all comes together Battlerite is a slick competitive experience.



Battlerite's heroes are a diverse bunch. Freya wields big hammers and can use the power of lightning.

Instant Reaction

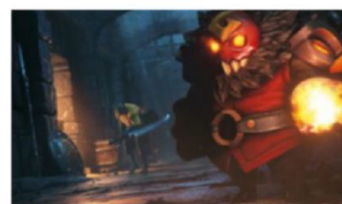
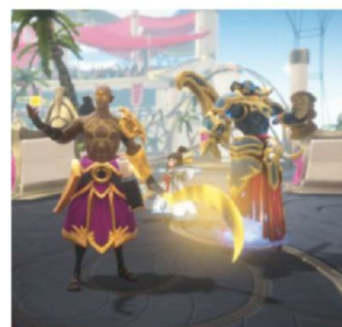
+ Polished and brilliantly designed, this is an exciting PvP game with loads to master. It deserves its early popularity.

- There's a lot to learn, and if you're not au fait with RPG or MOBA terminology then you might struggle at first.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Kinetic, colourful, heart-in-mouth combat. Smash Bros for Dota fans.



The shape of each arena matters a great deal, affecting line of sight and flanking routes. Be aware of the environment and don't get caught out!

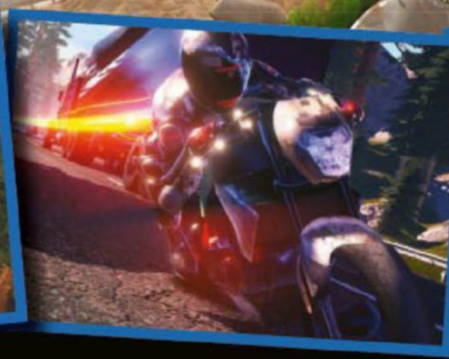
MR4

MOTORACER

FULL GAME
PLAYABLE
WITH



PlayStation VR



PRE-ORDER NOW!

COMING NOV 4TH



AVAILABLE FROM **GAME** & [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)



©2016 Anuman Interactive SA. All rights reserved. Published by Anuman Interactive SA. Microïds is a trademark of Anuman Interactive SA. All rights reserved.
Unreal® is a trademark or registered trademark of Epic Games, Inc. in the United States of America and elsewhere.
Unreal® Engine, Copyright 1998 – 2016, Epic Games, Inc. All rights reserved. Developed by Artefacts Studio.

GM Preview

Future Hits Played Now!

You can make your own completely custom characters if you like, using 'tags' to define their personality - whether a Hero, Scholar, Noble or Rogue.

Format PC Publisher Larian Studios Developer Larian Studios ETA Summer 2017

DIVINITY: ORIGINAL SIN 2

Let he who is without sin cast the first spell



There are role-playing games, and then there are games where you really *play* a role. At character creation, Larian's latest invites you to select an Origin, a predetermined personality and past, to go with your choice of stats and abilities.

Your pick - from ex-mercenary drug addict Ifan to demonically-possessed wanderer Lohse - shapes your experience of the story.

For a series that revels in complete player freedom, you might think that set player characters would ruin the fun, but in play these defined heroes serve as perfect anchors in Larian's weird and wonderful fantasy world. They lend more weight to your choices and actions, rather than less.

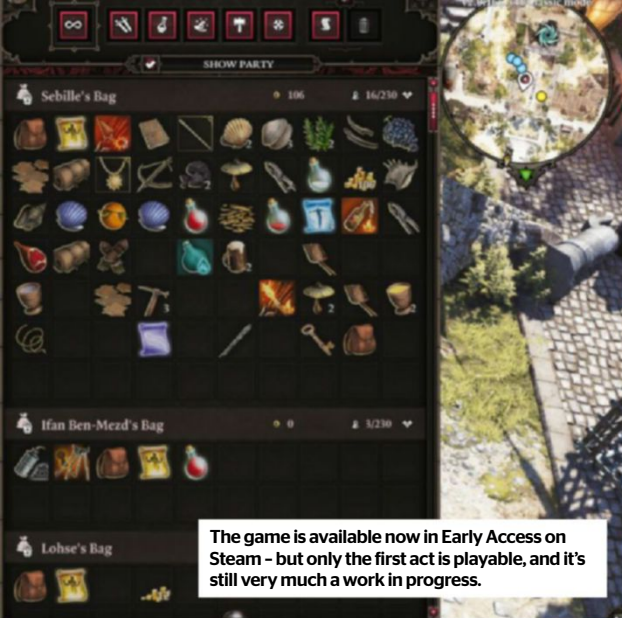
"We wanted to immerse you in the world of Rivellon, and give you roots in it," explains writer and game designer Kieron Kelly. "The Origin characters grew up in this world. When you pick one as your avatar, their history becomes yours. Their roots are your roots. Their pain is your pain. You still have huge choices to make - yes, character creation is limited a fraction but you determine the future of these characters. In essence, that's exactly what you do in all RPGs. Once the game starts you can't change the past, but your choices will decide the future."

Origin story

For our playthrough of the first act, we pick Seville, an escaped elf slave able to absorb the memories of the dead by... er, eating bits of corpses. Her outlook is nuanced enough to intrigue, but simple enough that slipping into character is almost automatic. Her past, subjugated by Lizardman masters, is a mystery to unravel, but for right now it's enough to know she hates the

**"COMPETITIVE QUESTING
ADDS SOME DELICIOUS
INTER-PARTY CONFLICT TO
YOUR ADVENTURES"**





scaly rotters and is out to cross a few off her 'to stab' list (which she tattoos all over her body, of course).

And these personal objectives don't exist in isolation. Our first potential hit is Stingtail, a Lizardman who can 'dream' the future. The problem? Our co-op partner has his own personal quest to meet with Stingtail and receive the wisdom of one of his visions - and he rather needs him alive to do so. This element of 'competitive questing' adds a seasoning of delicious inter-party conflict to your adventures.

"You have a main plot, with its main quests that need the group to (mostly) unite and solve, while the Origin stories add the flavour and the selfish nature of the personal quests," says Kelly. "This adds paranoia and a social dynamic that's really unique in this type of CRPG.

"This is exactly what you want when you hire that questionable rogue in an RPG. With previous games, you could trust the rogue implicitly once they joined the party. Everyone acts in one mind and one voice. But in Divinity: Original Sin 2? You should probably sleep with one eye open, because that rogue has a name, an Origin, and a story that may not be compatible with your own."

Red dead

As in its predecessor, Divinity: Original Sin 2's turn-based combat is a joyous mess of interweaving elemental effects. Slice an enemy with your sword, and their blood will pool on the ground. Hit the claret with a lightning bolt, and it'll become electrified, stunning your foe where they stand. For a bonus treat, once they're slain, use vampiric witchcraft to suck up the remaining fluid to restore your own health. Naughty, but nice.

And this time around, you don't just have to worry about whether the floor under your feet is on fire, or frozen, or covered in oil - you've also got to consider whether it's *good* or *evil*. Curse an elemental effect, and you'll render it corrupt, infecting clean water with disease to incapacitate your enemies, for example. Bless it, and you'll reap the benefits, as even a blazing fire starts healing your party instead of hurting them. You know you're in for an expansive role-playing experience when you're even making moral choices about the ground...

■ **Robin Valentine**



Instant Reaction

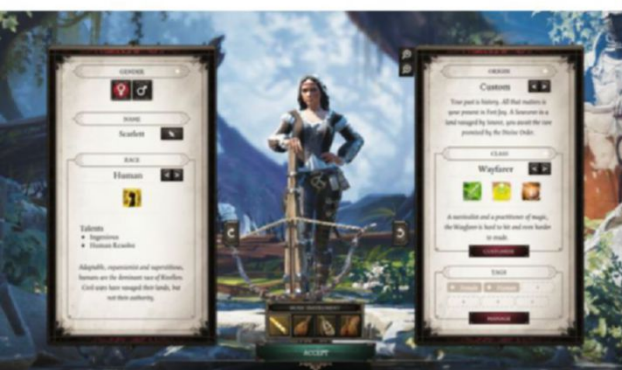
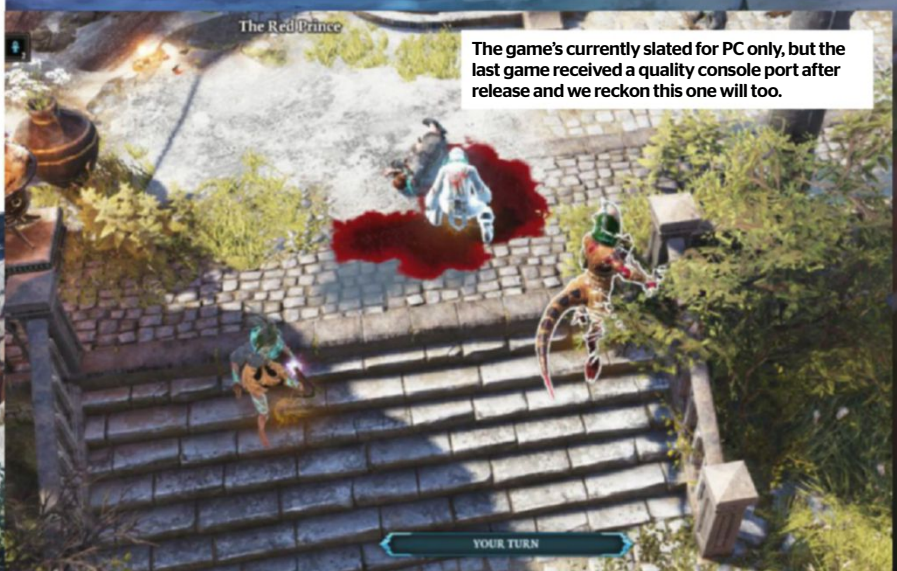
+ Provides a brilliant twist on RPG character creation, while still giving you the freedom to forge your own path.

- There's a long way to go yet - our hands-on is plagued by bugs and rough edges that'll need to be sorted for launch.

THRILL-O-METER



Old school RPG style combined with innovative new ideas.



GM Preview

Future Hits Played Now!

Meet Jack Baker, head of the psychotic family and owner of a pointy shovel that probably isn't going to end up anywhere nice.



Format PS4, XO, PC Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA 24 January 2017

RESIDENT EVIL 7: BIOHAZARD

Producer Masachika Kawata talks combat, horror, and VR

When this latest *Resident Evil* first revealed its *Beginning Hour* teaser, it seemed unrecognisable as an entry in the long-running series. Oh sure it was scary as all hell, but where were the brain-hungry zombies? Or the tentacle-headed Las Plagas? There wasn't even a glimpse of Chris Redfield's improbably-sized bulging biceps or a certain Kennedy's floppy fringe. Don't worry though, while some of the signature aspects have changed, it's still *Resident Evil*. Producer Masachika Kawata assures us the changes are all about bringing the series back to its rotten, squirmy roots.

While Capcom has confirmed the *Resident Evil 7* demos we've encountered up to this point - that's the *Beginning Hour* and *Lantern* teasers, and also the *Kitchen VR* tech demo first shown at E3

2015 - are standalone experiences and not simply sections taken wholesale from the final game, it's still fairly obvious that this latest entry to the series has stepped away from the more over-the-top, action orientated focus of recent instalments. So far nothing's exploded, no one (or thing) has jumped out of any windows, and not one megalomaniac scientist has turned into any kind of bone-dinosaur yet (*Resident Evil 5* we're looking at you). Masachika Kawata, are you absolutely positive this is still *Resident Evil*?

"I'm sure some fans are worried about the game being unfamiliar," Kawata tells us. However, the differences are all about bringing things back to where it all started. Remember the Spencer Mansion from the original *Resident Evil*? The unnerving sense of trepidation and uncertainty as you explored and realised that, yes, that scabby looking guy is eating the other man's face. Current changes are about trying to recapture that special feeling again. "We went for a

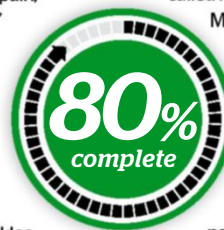
new setting and characters that are unfamiliar," Kawata says. "Because doing this is what lets us bring you a truly new horror experience."

Evil residents

So instead of a return to Raccoon City or some remote town in rural Spain, this "new horror experience" centres on a dilapidated Louisiana plantation mansion that just screams 'bad things will happen if you ring the doorbell'. Mainly because the doorbell looks suspiciously like it's made of human knuckles and hair. And who hung all these burned dolls and bones everywhere anyway? However, if you think a big scary house is about as classic *Resident Evil* as you can get, you're not alone. "I think some of the team have the mindset that 'mansion equals *Resident Evil*'" Kawata mentions of the new setting.

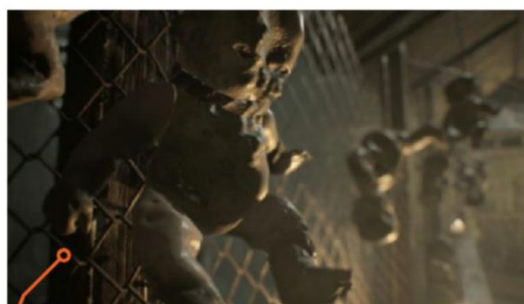
This is what we know so far: the *Beginning Hour* demo introduced a documentary team investigating the Bakers. That introduced us to Jack, the brutish, punchy father, and the game's tag line: 'Welcome to the family'. Then the *Lantern* demo showed a woman called Mia trying to escape

Marguerite Baker, the mother who favours screaming abuse over punching. There's also the son, Lucas, who is referred to as 'the bad seed' which, going on what we've seen of mom and pop, doesn't bode particularly well. Everything so far has painted the Bakers as a murderous, twisted group of hillbillies doing terrible things to their unfortunate 'guests' in the swamps. There are other snippets we can interpret. An update to the first demo granted access to a new area of the house and changed a family photo to





Obviously we know this is creepy murder central, but the rather lovely sun rays make this scene appear quite pleasant. Kawata says there are things in the game that are "beautifully rendered, yet will make you want to avert your eyes." Nice, but also... not nice.



Ornaments like this never bode well. 'Murder Christmas' is not a look that says 'Come in. This will all be fine'.



As well as a selection of guns, it's believed the main character will have access to a flamethrower and a chainsaw.



reveal the Bakers also had a daughter – a likely candidate for the ghost which can be glimpsed at various spots around the house. We've also seen Jack shake off being burned alive suggesting he's not entirely human, while a ratings leak reveals a plot focussing on a character called Ethan looking for his wife, a woman with a familiar name: Mia.

Fear the VR

Nothing's really clear at this stage, but uncertainty's the point and makes playing Resident Evil 7 such a (brilliantly) unpleasant experience. "That feeling that something could be waiting for you in

the shadows – it's such a direct, scary image" states Kawata, "In that sense it's something of a callback to the original game." There's also plenty we haven't seen. "We haven't shown it but the game does have a strong combat element that will have you thinking about how to fight and survive without shattering the horror atmosphere," Kawata clarifies. "You can avoid enemies of course, and run away, or you can attack them before they attack you!"

All this would be tipping the scare-o-meter needle as it is, but there's just that little extra element of the game being playable on PS VR which really

ramps up the risk of a brown trouser incident. If you thought the Beginning Hour demo was bad on a screen, then wait until VR puts you *in the house*. It's a horrifically claustrophobic experience that turns up the terror, and something Capcom is putting a lot of effort into perfecting: "We're working with Sony and implementing a variety of techniques, such as changing the character walking speed and the antialiasing used," Kawata explains. "We've made it so that you use the same save data whether you want to play in VR or not. You can choose to play in VR for the ultimate immersion when you're alone, but maybe play on the TV to share the experience with friends, so it's very unrestricted."

Which just leaves one very important question to ask Kawata: what's his favourite ever Resident Evil moment? "Based on how I feel right now I'd say it's the iconic scene where you first see a zombie and it turns to face the camera!" Ah, classic. ■ **Leon Hurley**

**"VR IS A HORRIFICALLY
CLAUSTROPHOBIC EXPERIENCE THAT
CAPCOM IS PUTTING A LOT OF
EFFORT INTO PERFECTING"**

GM Instant Reaction

+ About as on point as a horror game can be. Scary, uncertain and unpleasant, but in all the right ways.

- PS VR has such an impact on the experience it's not clear if the game will lose anything if not played with the goggles.

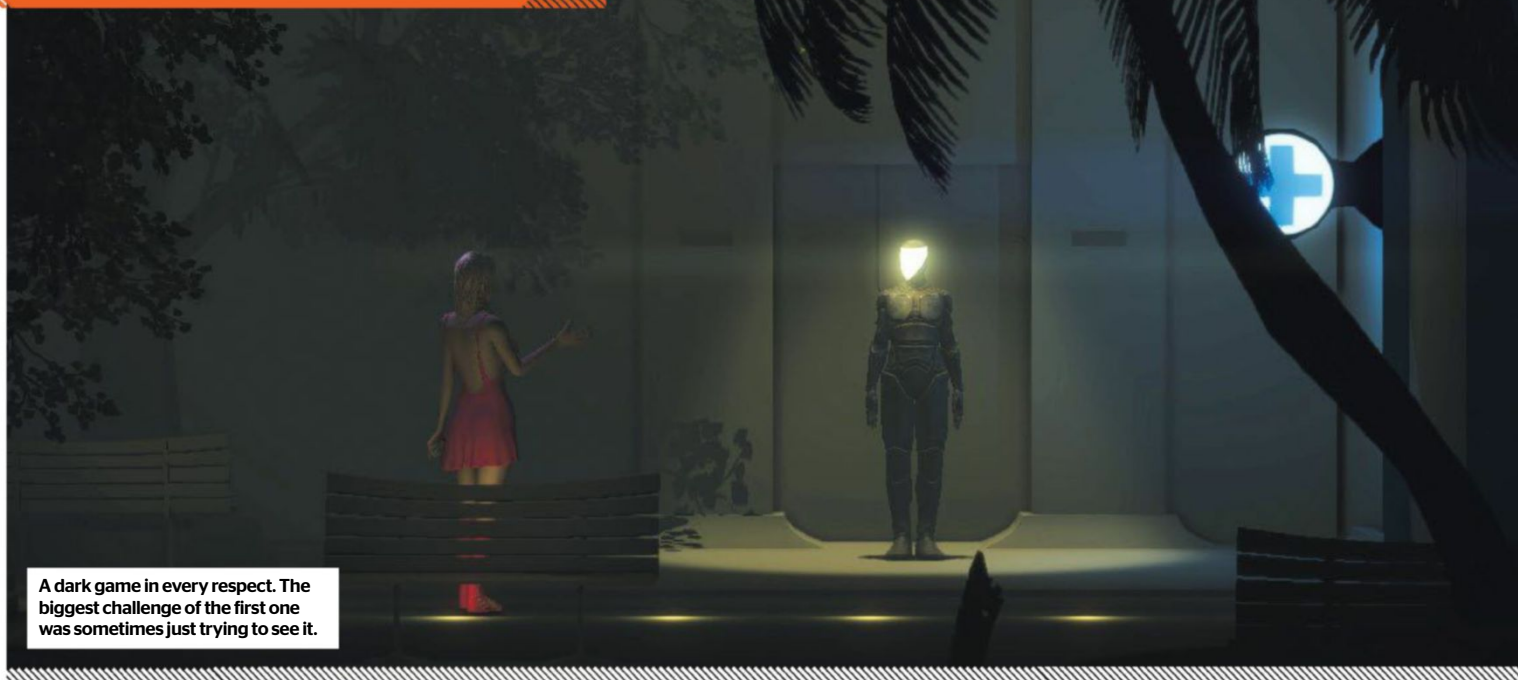
THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Resi's return to horror is bringing the fear back, and it's about time.

GM Preview

Future Hits Played Now!



A dark game in every respect. The biggest challenge of the first one was sometimes just trying to see it.

Format PS4, XO, Wii U, PC **Developer** Over The Moon Games
Publisher Over The Moon Games **ETA** Spring 2017

THE FALL PART 2: UNBOUND

Might shake your complete faith and trust in creepy AI robots

Sometimes it feels we only get two tones of adventure game: moody and dark, such as Telltale's *The Walking Dead*, or fully comedic efforts where storytelling comes second to firing off as many jokes as possible.

Three cheers for Over The Moon Games then, who proved with 2014's *The Fall* that you could tell a distinctly creepy sci-fi story and also have some dark laughs to sweeten the deal.

It followed an astronaut who had crash-landed on a mysterious planet. When the astronaut failed to wake up, their spacesuit activated its Autonomous Robotic Interface Device (ARID) – an AI designed to take control and find assistance in emergency situations. Playing as ARID you explored an abandoned training station for domestic robots, a surreal mix of mundane teaching rooms and gruesome body horror. One room would have a robot interface tutting at your lack of dusting

skills, while another would have a dead body nailed to a crucifix. It was a well told story with intuitive puzzles and a nasty twist ending that we won't spoil here.

Adventure time

This sequel features major improvements. The forgettable combat of the first game is revised. Now fights are a test of sharp reactions, as foes rush you from either side of the screen and you have to perfectly time your hits. We don't come to our adventure games expecting such addictive combat, so this was a pleasant kick to our surprise glands.

On the more traditional side of adventure gaming, ARID meets a robotic butler, still serving a human master and mistress who are clearly long dead. ARID needs this RoboJeeves' help, but the automaton minion refuses. The solution? Forge a letter from his masters informing the butler that they're both dead and he's fired. *Obviously*. Intrigued readers should definitely pick up the stellar original, and keep an eye out for when this sequel dro... sorry, falls. **Tom Stone**



GM Instant Reaction

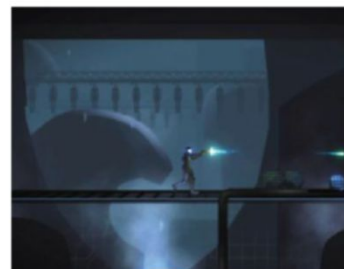
+ The combat has been drastically improved, and that was our only real issue with the first game.

- It's only the second part of a planned trilogy, so a proper resolution to ARID's story is still some ways off.

THRILL-O-METER



A long-awaited chance to continue ARID's compelling adventure.



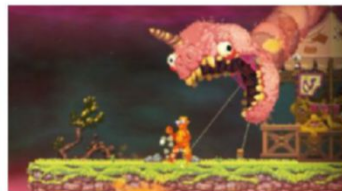
Developers tell us there'll be a lot more switching between characters this time around, courtesy of ARID's sinister possession powers.



Format PC **Pub** Landfall Games
Dev Landfall Games **ETA** Summer 2017

TOTALLY ACCURATE BATTLE SIMULATOR

Two armies of humanoids. One side red. One side blue. Give them some weapons and let them go at each other. That's pretty much the idea behind TABS, although it's the comical, primed-for-YouTube body physics of the combatants which promises to make this a dangerously compelling diversion. Indeed, the guff on Saturday night TV can't really compete when the alternative is watching a bunch of weaponised mannequins flail about in a glorious orgy of semi-brainless AI. ■



Format PC **Pub** Messhof
Dev Messhof **ETA** Summer 2017

NIDHOGG 2

The side-scrolling sword-swisher has a sequel and it's got a new look. The stylish old-school pixel vibe is gone and a SNES-era aesthetic takes its place. The radical change in art direction has divided fans into one of two camps: The 'I don't like it' camp and the 'I really don't like it' camp. We're thinking of starting a third camp – the 'We don't like how it looks but loved the original so are willing to give the follow-up a chance' camp. As well as the makeover, the sequel brings bows, local and online multiplayer, ten maps, and a single-player mode to the party. ■



Format PC **Pub** Flaming Fowl Studios
Dev Flaming Fowl Studios **ETA** Nov 2017

FABLE FORTUNE

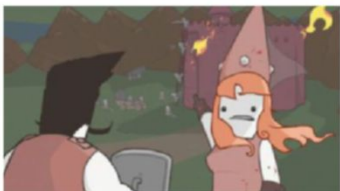
It's been less than a year since Microsoft turned off the lights at Lionhead, but Flaming Fowl Studios, a new studio founded by ex-staffers of the Fable developer, has been busy making progress on its own Albion-based offering. Fable Fortune is a collectible card game idea originally intended for Fable 2. Obviously it never came to fruition as a Lionhead project, but now it's on its way to PC as a free-to-play CCG. It's dressed head-to-toe in Fable finery, so there should be plenty to keep fans of the series shuffling their decks. ■



Format PS4, XO, PC **Pub** No Matter
Dev No Matter **ETA** Dec 2017

PREY FOR THE GODS

It's been a while since we first covered this impressive-looking survival adventure as part of IndieMaster, but the game continues to hold our attention. Not least because it gives more than just a passing nod to Shadow Of The Colossus – teasing glimpses of the hero going up against (and climbing up) several imposing giants as she journeys across a snow-covered wilderness make it impossible not to draw comparisons with the PS2 masterpiece. Other sources of inspiration include Deus Ex, Bloodborne, and DayZ, say the devs. ■



Format XO, PC **Pub** The Behemoth
Dev The Behemoth **ETA** Summer 2017

PIT PEOPLE

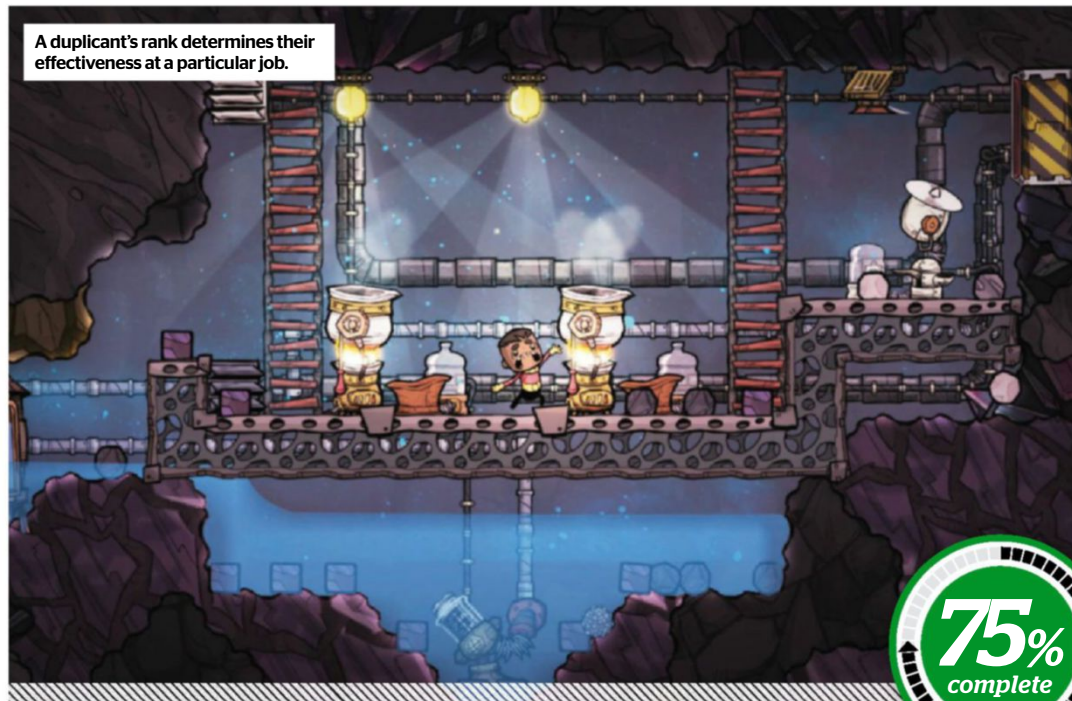
Ever seen a strategy game have a funny turn?

When you think 'turn-based strategy' the first things that pop to mind probably aren't hair trolls in flower bonnets or gun maniacs astride flying giraffes. But indie dev The Behemoth (of Castle Crashers fame) likes to do things in its own special way.

The action takes place across hex-based battlefields and, as ever in a TBS, you use allies and cunning to vanquish foes. But while the core mechanics will be familiar to patrons of the genre, everything else about this tactical skirmish adventure appears to be completely nuts, like an out-of-control kid's party. We can't ever recall a giant bear's paw (a giant space bear's paw, no less) crushing parts of the map mid-battle in Advance Wars, for example. And we're pretty sure Fire Emblem has never given us the opportunity to join the fray with a unit of adorable cupcake people who can launch gluten from a mini trebuchet strapped to their backs.

You'll be able to wade into the madness either solo, with a co-op buddy, or as a group of four in a 2v2 mode. ■

GM Instant Reaction
THRILL-O-METER 1 2 3 4 5
Strategy with oodles of charm and chaos.



Format PC **Publisher** Klei Entertainment **Developer** Klei Entertainment **ETA** Spring 2017

OXYGEN NOT INCLUDED

In space, no-one can hear you breathe (because there's no air, duh)

If there's any word combo that sends our nerd klaxon into party-time overdrive, it has to be 'space-colony simulation'. Mmmmm, delicious. Even better, this one comes from Klei, the dev behind such quality offerings as Don't Starve, Invisible Inc, and Mark Of The Ninja. A strong pedigree indeed.

Oxygen Not Included's colony is located inside an asteroid, presented in a 2D cross-section ant farm style, and populated with diddy folks known as

duplicants. The objective is to keep colonists alive and ensure the base is well maintained. This means taking care of the basics, such as food, water, heat and, yes, oxygen. Ultimately what you'll be aiming for as benevolent overseer is a happy community and for your busy interstellar dwellers to thrive.

Key to achieving a state of well-oiled social serenity will be the very careful management of duplicants. Each one has a rank – technician and construction worker, for example – and can be assigned a job, such as 'dig', 'build' and 'cook'. As they work, they level-up, get a

stat boost and become more useful/efficient. As you progress, more duplicants become available and so the colony can expand. Control of duplicant activity and general base management is via what appears to be a very clean, intuitive interface.

So, a space-colony simulation set inside a rock floating through the frigid vacuum of space? That sounds like our kind of party. ■ **Matt Cundy**

GM Instant Reaction
THRILL-O-METER 1 2 3 4 5
Fun-looking colony sim from A+ indie dev.

PlayStation and PS4 are registered trademarks of Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.

OVER 50 GAMES
AVAILABLE IN 2016
FOR PLAYSTATION VR

INCLUDING
PlayStation®
VR WORLDS

PS4®

LIVE ^{THE} GAME

 PlayStation VR

OUT NOW



playstation.com/psvr

NIGHT & DAY

It's all change in **Sun** and **Moon**,
Pokémon's biggest and boldest
adventures yet

By Ben Griffin



THE NEXT GENERATION

We pick our starter, wave bye to mum, and play the first three hours of Pokémon Sun and Moon

The sun's shining, the Pikipeks are singing, and everyone has a permanent grin stuck to their face. It's always been hard to stay grouchy playing a

Pokémon game, but now in the exotic and welcoming new island chain called Alola, it's impossible. This is like taking your pets on a tropical holiday, only your pets can breathe fire and fly and stuff. Almost 20 years since the Game Boy original, in which you also embarked on a coming-of-age adventure to catch and train magical monsters, that sensation hasn't gone. In fact, it's blossomed.

Our hands-on starts with a video message from the painfully hip Professor Kukui, grinning through the screen in open scientist's lab coat and sunglasses. The prof, it turns out, is your cousin, and he wants to introduce you to the wonderful world of Pokémon. What took him so long? Before heading out we indulge in a little ritual – exploring our bedroom. Those who've played Red and Blue will appreciate the callbacks – the TV showing "Four boys walking down railroad tracks", the era's Nintendo console underneath (here a Wii U), a globe on which the Kanto region "seems really far away".

Mum's downstairs as usual, remarking, "I still remember you battling the Indigo leaders", and cardboard moving boxes around her suggest you've uprooted from Pallet Town, giving Sun and Moon a continuity past entries lacked. Heading out of your beach house into a luscious 3D world, something else is abundantly clear –

this is Pokémon on a bigger scale than ever before. Gone are rigid grid-based navigation and the snapping-to-item system in favour of full freedom of movement. It's closer to the GameCube's Pokémon XD: Gale Of Darkness than a top-down handheld offering, making a clear effort to incorporate the 3DS' glasses-less 3D in sweeping views of shimmering coves and nervous treads across plank bridges.

It's on this bridge we encounter the mysterious Lillie and, following a scuffle with several Spearow, find ourselves plummeting to our doom. Suddenly the island guardian, Tapu Koko, swoops in and saves us. On the way back to town, Lillie reveals she's Professor Kukui's assistant, and here residents worship Tapu Koko for watching over Melemele Island. It's one of several island/guardian pairings.

Rising sun

Next we're told to find the Kahuna, although we're not really sure what that is. "You can't miss him," says Kukui. "He looks just like a Kahuna!" Turns out a Kahuna is an island leader. On Melemele the Kahuna is called Hala, and he offers another treasured ritual – choosing our starter Pokémon. It's Litten all the way for us.

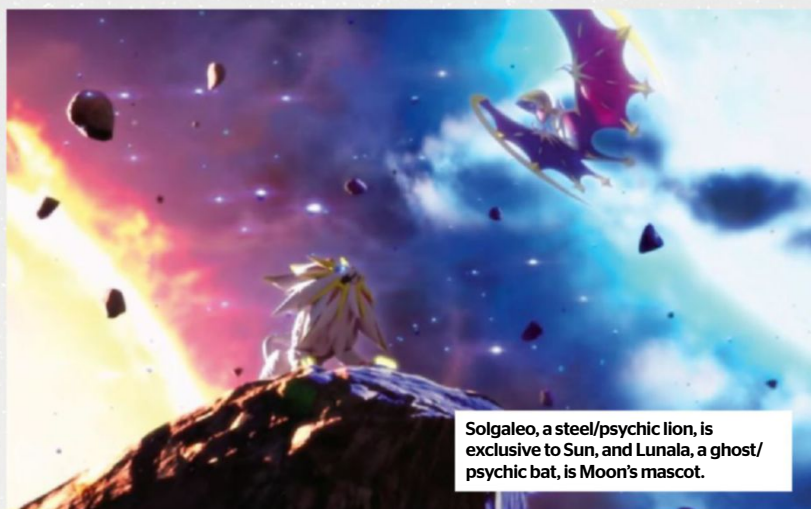
As we're on the way to parade it in front of mum, a boy appears for our first battle. Hau, it seems, is to be your rival like Gary Oak before him, only not a jerk. Strangely, where rivals usually choose the Pokémon type you're weakest against, Hau plumps for grass type Rowlet, which our fire moves handle super effectively. Fights are more intense, with tilted camera angles, urgent music, and frequent cuts to teeth-gritting trainers, making our one-sided hammering all the sweeter. It's a shame most attacks don't physically connect – Litten simply performs a scratch motion in place and Rowlet flinches six feet away – but given the huge roster, clipping issues would be a nightmare.

Our next clash aptly demonstrates the game's friendlier focus. When we get close to Youngster Jimmy the camera zooms in to warn us a fight's brewing, and we can avoid it by taking the gravel route around him. We fight, obviously. A helpful tip next to moves reveals how effective they are in order to remove trial and error, and another one informs of stat changes caused by moves such as Rain Dance. "My papa got me that Pokémon," he says when we destroy his Yungoos. "He's always with me." Oh great, now we feel bad.

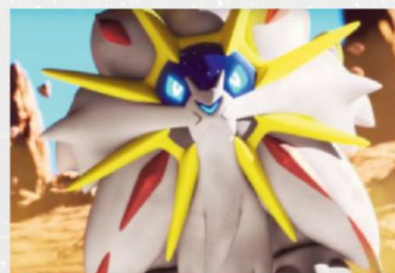
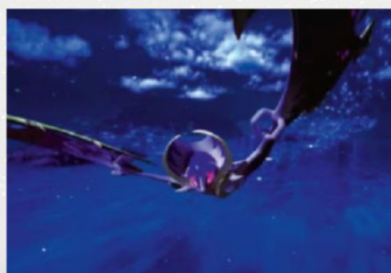
SAY CHEESE

A new camera to take pics of Pokés

The Poké Finder picks up where 2000's Pokémon Snap left off by finally letting you live out your dreams of being a wildlife photographer. Amble up to specific points in the environment, such as a fetching vista or crack in a wall, and press the right trigger to take a snap, with the option of saving it to the 5D card. Different times and conditions determine what photogenic critters appear – at midday in Hau'oli City, for instance, we spy a Pikachu playing happily behind a building. When finished, you can upload your pictures to the game's Instagram-style sharing network where people enthusiastically rate it. Sure, the people are only pretend and their comments randomly generated, but hey, at least there aren't any trolls.



Solkaleo, a steel/psychic lion, is exclusive to Sun, and Lunala, a ghost/psychic bat, is Moon's mascot.

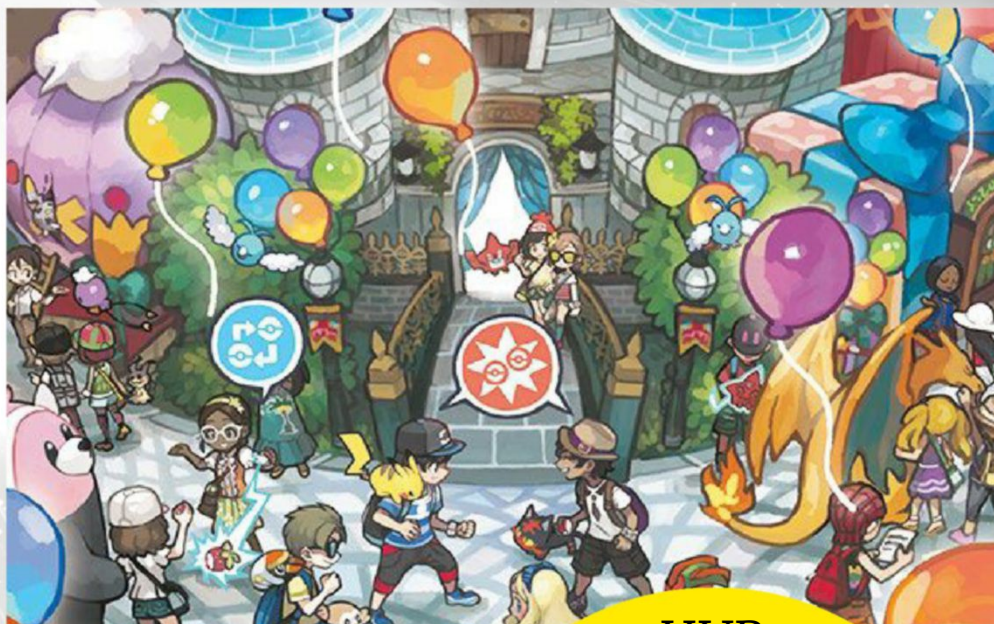


An hour in and we've learned lots about Alola culture, scored cool points with a guardian, and won several dust-ups. But it's time for another milestone - our first jaunt to the big city, Hau'oli. Lillie's with us, and she advises we go via the Pokémon Research Lab on the way. There's plenty of life here - a Snubbull playfully chases a Stufful, and a Poliwhirl hits a punchbag in the corner. Sun and Moon's colourful cast, it appears, are up and out of their Pokéballs for a much more prominent and active role.

Full moon

As we travel to Hau'oli, we wander down one route and find a Taurus blocking the way. Clearly, we're not meant to go here yet. It's a tried and tested gating device (remember Snorlax and the Poké Flute?), but one that means you're never left wondering what to do next. And if you do need guidance, just consult your new Pokédex, which is inhabited by electric ghost Pokémon, Rotom. Sure, a living Pokédex sounds a little gimmicky, but Rotom offers help with added spark. Just try not to jab him in the eye on the touchscreen.

Finally we reach the city, and it's the biggest single location we've seen in a Pokémon game. There's a main street with chunky vehicles parked at the side of the road (there's rumour we'll be able to drive them later), a shopping district, a beachfront filled with battle-ready sunbathers, ferry terminal, and police station. Even Hau'oli's Pokémon Centres are impressively massive, with an incorporated mart to buy healing potions and balls, Nurse Joy in the middle, and a cafe on the left. We order a tall frosty glass of Pinap juice for its restorative properties, and get a free Shalour



HUB CRAWL

Find fun and friends in the Festival Plaza

Physical destination? Alternate reality? Fever dream? While it's actual location remains unclear, the Festival Plaza's function is simple - a place for meeting and mingling with real players to trade, battle, chat, and play minigames. From our experience it works like StreetPass, beaming anyone in close proximity into your instance, but you can also link up with players globally by presumably swapping friend codes.

Talk to them for coins you can use to access the Dye House (colour fashion items), Bouncy House (raise a Pokémon's attributes), Lottery Shop (draw tickets to win items), and more. You can also embark on co-op missions, such as Pokémon-catching contests, to raise your festival rank and earn prizes. It's a definitive multiplayer hub.

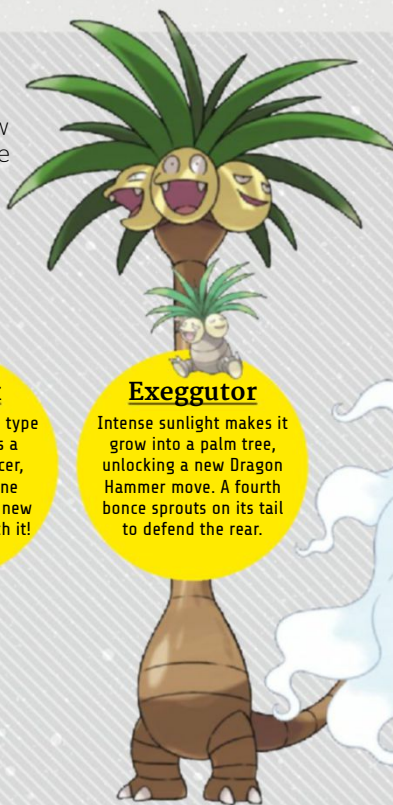
sable on the side, which is a tasty shortbread used to heal status conditions. Nice.

We're let off the leash a bit now, finding an optional mission in the tourist bureau from a man who gives us a Poké Finder and asks us to photograph ten Pokémon for a prize. Down the road is Trainers' School, a mini dungeon of sorts in which we must find and defeat four pupils and a teacher. And at the south of Hau'oli is the dock, where our session ends with a showdown against Team Skull.

We could have easily played until the sun came up, or indeed, the moon. With a world warm in both senses of the word, a seemingly gym-less story that treads fresh ground for the series, and all-new army of Pokémon to train into unstoppable beasts, we're counting the days (and nights) until release.

Costume change

Old friends get facelifts with new Alola forms, which spruce up the appearances of dozens of Pokémon and bless them with new moves, types and abilities. Here are four dressed for the occasion.



Exeggutor

Intense sunlight makes it grow into a palm tree, unlocking a new Dragon Hammer move. A fourth bone sprouts on its tail to defend the rear.



Ninetales

Not everyone is tropical. The Alola Ninetales adapts to its mountainous climate by growing ice crystals on its fur, which it can shoot as frosty bullets.



Raichu

Raichu turns his tail into a surfboard, getting around the whole 'electricity+water = bad' thing by levitating using fresh psychic powers.



Marowak

The formerly ground type Marowak becomes a ghost/fire tiki dancer, with a flaming bone baton enabling hot new attacks. Whoa, watch it!

SQUAD GOALS

Our top picks for the ultimate Sun and Moon team

THE TANK

Frontline flak absorber



BEWEAR

Stands at a whopping 6ft 11in. Its fluffy ability handily halves damage from any physical attacks, but there's one drawback - it's ultra flammable and fire attacks deal double damage!



MINIOR

This shell-encased 'mon floats around a stratosphere filled with debris, so there's little wonder it's sturdy enough to survive a whack or two. Minior's squishy exposed form is more vulnerable, though.



MUDSDALE

Quite literally the workhorse of the team, weathering blows with its thick hide and strong back. A transportation mule, it has among the highest stamina of any Pokémon on Alola.

THE SPEEDSTER

Strikes first and puts foes on the back foot



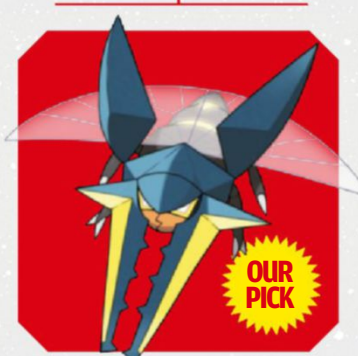
SALANDIT

Its corrosion ability allows Salandit to poison types that don't normally succumb to the technique, such as steel and poison. Use its cunning evasive manoeuvres to make Pokémon hurt themselves.



WISHIWASHI

When in danger, nippy water type Wishiwashi flashes its eyes and summons friends to temporarily enter school form, raising its stats until it sustains a certain amount of damage.

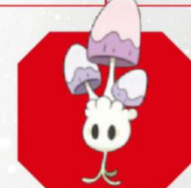


VIKAVOLT

This beetle-like creature is used to engaging in high-speed aerial battles with prey in the wild as it weaves through tangled forests. What it lacks in power it more than makes up for in swiftness.

THE TRICKSTER

Messes with other Pokémon's conditions



MORELULL

If the name didn't give it away, Morelull is all about lulling opponents to sleepy time beddy-byes so you can swap in your heavy hitters and smack them around before they wake up.



TSAREENA

Evolving from the the berry-like Bounsweet, during battle Tsareena emits special fragrances that play with opponents' conditions. And watch out for her kicks - they're leaf-al.



COMFEY

Certain battles restrict the use of potions. The lei-looking Comfey heals and protects teammates with its restorative moveset, and its Triage ability gives these moves the highest priority. Ahh, refreshing.

THE HANDYMAN

For when you need help outside of battles



CRABRAWLER

Previously, you taught Pokémon HM techniques to help exploration. If this feature returns in Sun and Moon, Crabrawler makes a versatile candidate for the techniques of Surf and Rock Smash.



TOGEDEMARU

As it's the spitting image of a certain yellow mouse, it stands to reason Togedemaru is equally adept. Like Pikachu, he may be able to learn Dig, Flash, Strength, and Rock Smash for maximum versatility.



SILVALLY

The Frankensteinian collection of parts known as Silvally looks capable of navigating a variety of obstacles, what with its fishy tail, insectoid front legs, dog body, and cat face. Weirdest Pokémon yet?

THE DRAGON

Come on, every team needs a dragon



DRAMPA

Boasting high attack stats, dragon types are so awesome they're actually weak to *other* dragon types. Drampa here has the berserk ability, which raises its special attack stat when his health drops below half.



TURTONATOR

Lives on volcanoes and feeds on raw sulphur. This diet makes it highly combustible, and it can cause explosions by tail-striking itself. A shield covers its delicate belly.



KOMMO-O

This pangolin-looking dragon has the Bulletproof ability, which means it's not affected by explosive moves. Kommo-o has the upper hand against Turtonator. Sorry, upper claw.

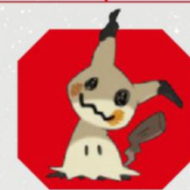
THE CUTIE-PIE

For the adorbs factor alone



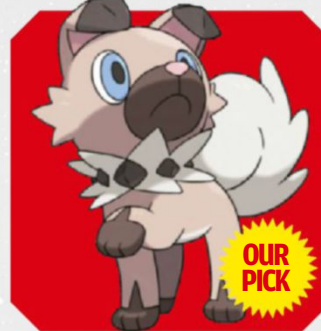
KOMALA

Constantly immersed in its own dream world, Komala has never been seen awake, although its expressions sometimes indicate awareness of its surroundings. It also only clings to trainers it trusts. Aww.



MIMIKYU

Poor Mimikyu. It just wants to make friends. That's why it dresses up as other more popular Pokémon, like Pikachu. Seeing its true form possibly induces illness. Cuteness points lost.



ROCKRUFF

Dogs are basically real life Pokémon, and Rockruff is the closest thing to a catchable canine this side of Growlithe. Also, he can evolve into a wolf or a werewolf depending on whether you have Sun or Moon!

ON THE BENCH



WIMPOD

Wimpod eats anything, even garbage, and uses it to spit a poisonous liquid when threatened, which is always.



GUMSHOOS

We've said it before, we'll say it again: Gumshoos looks like Donald Trump. Also mongooses are bloody vicious.



PYUKUMUKU

If stepped on, Pyukumuku expels its guts. It's also so stubborn that it will stay in one spot until it starves. People earn livings throwing it back into the sea.



SANDYGAST

Imbued with the spirits of fainted Pokémon, Sandygast uses its shovel to possess children and make them bring over more sand. What?

WHAT? IT'S EVOLVING!

The all-new features you need to know about



okémon Sun and Moon introduce radical change to the series, with more additions and improvements than ever before. Chief among them is the time difference, which we will explain...

1 ...now. Sun takes place at whatever the time is where you are, and Moon happens half a day later. So if, for instance, you intend to play after work in the evening, but still want to see daylight in the game, get Moon.

2 This affects Pokémon evolutions. In Sun, Rockruff evolves into Lycanroc's Midday Form, a gorgeous blue-eyed wolf. In Moon, his

Midnight Form is a feral-looking werewolf. Pokémon also change forms under other conditions. Feed Oricorio nectar from different flowers and she alters her dancing, adopting Baile, Pom-Pom, Pa'u, or Senu style and becoming fire, electric, psychic, or ghost type respectively.

3 There are now far more rideable Pokémon to help you get around. You can hop on the back of a Mudsdale, Taurus, Dragonite, Sharpedo, and more to traverse land, sea, and air. Hey, it beats walking.

4 Z-Moves are powerful new techniques for all 18 elemental types that any Pokémon can utilize once per scrap. Simply slot

a Z-Crystal into your Z-Ring and make sure your Pokémon is holding a Z-Crystal of the same type. Some Pokémon even get their own moves, like Eevee's stat-raising EvoBoost, or Snorlax's Pulverizing Pancake (Snorlax is really not a morning person).

5 There are a few new type combinations to try: Drampa is normal/dragon, Cutiefly is bug/fairy, and Salandit is poison/fire. More mysterious are Ultra Beasts, an unknown quantity with the power to threaten all life in Alola. Muscle-bound mosquito man UB-02 Absorption is exclusive to Sun, while graceful UB-02 Beauty is only for Moon players, and floating jellyfish UB-01 is shared across both. Lacking Pokédex entries, they're more mysterious than even Legendaries.

6 Totem Pokémon are essentially supersized Pokémon with the ability to command *other* Pokémon. Picture a 12ft tall Gumshoos sending Yungoos into battle. They're likely part of Island Trials which, rather than a procession of scuffles inside stuffy gyms, see you complete tasks in the great outdoors. Trial Captain Kiawe's, for instance, seems to be about picking differences in various dance performances. This should earn you the right to fight the Trial Captain, the Totem Pokémon, and the Kahuna of each island.

7 To really get the best from your team there's Hyper Training, a new stat-boosting method for pros. If you've got a

"ULTRA BEASTS ARE MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN EVEN LEGENDARIES"



FROG OF WAR

Play the demo for a rare Pokémon

The Sun and Moon demo currently available to download for free on the eShop (or just scan the QR code on the left!) isn't any old trial run. It actually contains the rare Pokémon Ash-Greninja, an awesome ninja frog with a tongue for a scarf that appears alongside Ash in the TV show. Better yet, you're able to transfer Ash-Greninja and any valuable items you find from the demo to the full version of the game when it launches on 23 November.

CELESTIAL BODIES

Meet the colourful cast of characters waiting to meet you in Sun and Moon

SOPHOCLES

Both a Trial Captain and Festival Plaza owner, shy Sophocles specializes in electric Pokémon. He likes inventing machines and, apparently, scowling.

PROFESSOR KUKUI

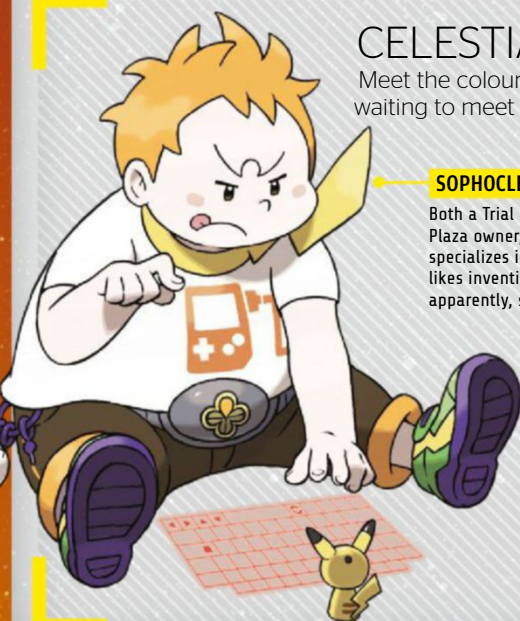
This guy is actually your cousin. He has a hands-on approach to Pokémon research – he wilfully suffers attacks to learn their effects firsthand.

HAU

Hala's grandson and your main rival in Sun and Moon, smiley Hau shows up at points to test your skills against his alternate starter Pokémon.

HALA

The Kahuna of Melemele Island, and organises festivals in honour of the island guardian, Tapu Koko.



FASHION STATEMENT

Dress to impress with new style options

The Apparel Shop in Hau'oli City is your makeover destination du jour, featuring tropical tees, flowery tank tops, pink polo shirts, bright jeans, cargo shorts, and funny bucket hats. You can also change your socks, backpack, sunglasses, and contact lens colour to an appropriately garish shade before striking a pose in the dressing room and saving a selfie to your trainer card.

level 100 monster you can pay a visit to a special shop and exchange bottle caps to further increase their power (or IVs). This is perfect to beef-up before a Battle Royale, which is a four-person free-for-all decided by who scores the most knockouts.

8 If you're worried about overworking your team, like any good trainer should be, try Pokémon Restore in the quick menu - give your Bounsweet Poké Berries to improve his performance, or cure a Popplio's paralysis by patting her on the head.

9 Good news for sentient life everywhere - sending captured Pokémon to your PC now gives them access to a lovely virtual island called Poké Pelago, where they can happily roam free from the stuffy confines of a folder. Those left on Isle Aphun may sniff out valuable items for you, while ones on Isle Evelup can train and improve.

10 While not technically a new feature, Mega Evolutions make a return, and are now triggered via the Z-Ring. That means if you transfer Pokémon from X, Y, Omega Ruby, Alpha Sapphire, Pokémon Bank, or Virtual Console releases of Red, Blue, or Yellow, you could see the magnificent specimen that is Mega Ampharos in all his mulleted glory.

You know what beats biking? Riding a freaking dragon! Cross lakes on a Lapras or smash rocks with Sharpedo.



MYSTERIOUS LILLIE

She works closely with Professor Kukui. We don't see her battle, but for some reason she always seems to be in a hurry...

KIAWE

A Trial Captain, fiery Kiawe and his Alola Marowak study traditional dances. In his trial, he asks you to observe the differences between jigs.





LEGENDARY ENCOUNTER

With a combined total of over three decades at Game Freak, **Shigeru Ohmori** and **Junichi Masuda** are key players in Pokémon's history. We chat Sun and Moon's story, island trials, and what's going on with Exeggutor's neck...

Q What are your character's motivations and what are they ultimately trying to achieve?

A **Shigeru Ohmori:** The main aim of the characters is going around the different islands, becoming stronger, and ultimately trying to become the champion of Alola region. With regards to Team Skull, they're causing trouble on all the different islands, and they are very much out to steal Pokémon. As for the Aether Foundation, they take Pokémon that are rare - endangered if you like - and look after them. But other than that, the people of Alola are not really sure exactly what the Aether Foundation is up to. What we want players to do is explore the game, go through the story and enjoy finding these people and seeing what each of them are all about.

Q The structure of handheld Pokémon RPGs is typically 'trainer beats each town's gym leader to get badges and compete against the Elite Four'. What is the structure this time?

A **SO:** Something we've always had is the trainer vs trainer aspect, but this time we've gone for a slightly different feel with trials. You've got Totem Pokémon who have become really strong on their own, so by overcoming these trials and beating the Totem Pokémon you become stronger and ultimately aim to become the strongest champion in the region. The idea is to give a new fresh experience to every player, regardless of whether they're playing for the first time or if they've been playing for many, many years.

Q Handheld Pokémon RPGs always come in pairs. Why did you choose 'sun and moon' to represent the split?

A **SO:** One thing I wanted to express was a close relationship between Pokémon and humans. This idea started me thinking where I should set the game and one place I thought of was Hawaii. I've been there many times on holiday and I think the people have a really close connection to nature in their

everyday lives. And with regards to creating the titles, Hawaii has a lot of sunshine - it's a really bright and beautiful place - and at night you've got the moon reflecting in the sea. It's really beautiful. The theme behind the game is the connection between Pokémon and humans, and the basic idea is that is life. The sun is certainly vital for life, and so is the moon. It affects our gravity, and the rhythms of living things, so all of these different aspects really inspired the way we chose to go about this game, and the theme, and obviously the title of the game itself.

Q Previous games have featured a day-night cycle and modelled the passing of time. What does Sun and Moon's night cycle do differently and how does it improve the day-night cycle concept?

A **SO:** One big change in this idea of time is that Sun and Moon are set 12 hours apart. In Pokémon Sun, the time will reflect the actual time outside, the standard time where you are, whereas Pokémon Moon is set 12 hours ahead, so it'll be night-time when it's day. This lets you find different Pokémon at the same time of day.



SHIGERU OHMORI
DIRECTOR

No Pokémon gets approved before Ohmori says so (that means he's also responsible for the horror of Sandygast...). As well as working on Sun and Moon, Ohmori has acted as designer for a litany of Pokémon games, including Ruby and Sapphire, Diamond and Pearl, X and Y, and Black and White, and his brain also brought us the Pokéwalker pedometer device.

So a player playing Pokémon Sun might find a Yungoos during the day, but at the same time a player playing Pokémon Moon, though it's daytime in the real world, they're going to find night-time Pokémon in the game, such as an Alola form Rattata. With all of these different things, we're hoping to really encourage players to communicate with one another.

Q The Z-Moves look amazing, but what restrictions are you putting in place so they're not too powerful?

A **SO:** With the Z-Moves we've had our staff really take a lot of time considering the battle system and making sure it's fully balanced. It certainly isn't the case that just by using the Z-Moves everything's going to be very easy. There's also the restriction that you can only use a Z-Move once per battle, so it's this idea of deciding when is the best time to use it. The Z-Moves can be used by any Pokémon, so this will hopefully give rise to people using more Pokémon. We do think Z-Moves will contribute to a really deep and even greater strategy behind Pokémon battles than we've ever had before.



Several islands form Alola. They feature frigid peaks, bubbling volcanoes, desert plains, and cities.



Take relationships with old Pokémon to the next level with Z-Moves. Here's Pikachu's electrifying Gigavolt Havoc.

Q To trade Pokémon back in the '90s you'd have to connect a Game Boy with a link cable. Now you can trade with anyone around the world. What kinds of improvements are you bringing to Pokémon trading?

A Junichi Masuda: So just like previously we've got the GTS feature where you can use wifi to connect with people all over the world. This time around we've also added the Quick-Link feature where you can quickly open a trade with another player, and just get straight into it like that. There's also a simple chat feature in there so you can exchange fun greetings or messages with other players, so we really think that these sorts of small additions will add an extra layer of enjoyment to the communication features in the game, and hopefully allow players to have a deeper experience on that side of things.

Q Simply, which of the new Pokémon is your favourite and why?

A JM: Perhaps it's not an entirely new Pokémon, but I'm a big fan of Alola Exeggutor. It's really cool to imagine climbing up it and getting to the top and seeing what's up there. And I really like Rockruff, it's just a really cute Pokémon and you can feel the relationship it has with people - it appears in lots of different places alongside humans. Another aspect that's cool about Rockruff is between Pokémon Sun and Moon it evolves into a different form, so that aspect is something that's really different and hopefully something players will enjoy.

Q Finally, how do you want fans to react to Sun and Moon?

A SO: That's a tough question! We want people to play the game and really get into it. Ultimately we want players to be communicating about Pokémon Sun and Moon, and sharing their experiences with the games. It's all about discovery, and after you've got into the new Pokémon, discovering the depth of the battle system and enjoying that side of things as well. We certainly want people to enjoy the full depth the game has to offer. What's new with Sun and Moon is that it's playable in nine different languages, so if people all over the world, speaking different languages and from different countries, can have a lot of fun trading, battling, enjoying the game itself, that would be really great. And also we just want this to be a celebration of Pokémon itself!

"Z-MOVES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO EVEN GREATER STRATEGY BEHIND POKÉMON BATTLES THAN EVER BEFORE"

Q Regarding fan reception, what feedback have you taken on-board from previous games in the series? Are there any changes fans have been asking for that you've implemented in this game?

A SO: We do always listen to our fans and their hopes and what they have to say about the game because it's really important. But if we just take their ideas and bung them into the game then that's not going to be very surprising for players, because they'll have already thought of those ideas. What we really try and do is listen to those ideas, but then take that and think, "How can we use this to surprise players? How can we give them something new that they perhaps haven't thought of?" This time around, as an example, we've got the Alola forms. A lot of these are Pokémon from the Kanto region that people are really familiar with, but now we get to see this new form, these new evolutions, and by doing this we're able to provide them with a surprise that they never even thought was possible.

Q Just broadly, could you walk us through the creation of a Pokémon from the concept stage to final completion?

A SO: There's really no set process in the way we go about designing Pokémon. Different designers have their own personal way of going about things. One designer might first consider a real world animal and start from



JUNICHI MASUDA
PRODUCER

Has worked at Game Freak since its inception in 1989 and sits on the board of directors. Although a talented composer (Masuda is responsible for creating Pokémon Red and Blue's music and sound effects), during his time working on the series he's worked on everything from programming, to producing, to designing, to coming up with names for the Pokémon themselves. He clearly loves a pun - our kind of guy.

there. Another might think of a Pokémon that would fit well with the feel of an area. Another thing designers can often do is think about the battle system, so perhaps one Pokémon type, or one particular Pokémon is really strong, so we'll design a Pokémon that would work well against that. There are all these different ways we approach designing Pokémon, I think this actually is what gives us such a great range of Pokémon and different styles across the games.

Q There's no voice acting, and when Pokémon roar they don't say their names, unlike the anime. Is this a stylistic choice or is it down to memory constraints?

A SO: When we first started, we were really restricted by the hardware, but nowadays that's not the case. For example, in the games we have Pikachu saying its own name just like it does in the anime. But what we do with our games is really consider what the purpose of the Pokémon's cry is. We consider what type of creature it is, its habitat, how it lives... all these kinds of things help to decide what style of cry it might have, based on all of that information. We also have slightly different cries for the same Pokémon, so when you stroke a Pokémon for example, it might have a different tone to its cry because it's feeling happy. When we're designing the main games, exactly what kind of cry we want the Pokémon to have is something we really consider.

IndieMaster

The Best Of The Indie Scene!



The team was influenced by writer Jorge Luis Borges, who wouldn't find a sentient space palace odd, apparently.

Who is...



Ultra Ultra is based in Copenhagen, and is made up of a team of former IO-Interactive devs who have expertly crafted our Hitman adventures for the last ten years. Echo is the small studio's very first game, but given their track record in stealth, we're in safe, if deadly, hands.

Format PC Developer Ultra Ultra ETA Spring 2017 Web <http://bit.ly/gmechogame>

#1 ECHO

Who's the deadliest of them all?



However you play games, be it ultra stealthy pacifism or all guns blazing action, this intriguing indie

effort will make you question yourself. With a world that spawns hostile clones who behave exactly as you do, it holds up a mirror to the player and pits you against your own worst enemy: yourself.

"I remember us wondering how this idea of an enemy that mimics the player wasn't fully explored in any game we'd heard of," explains game director and Ultra Ultra CEO, Martin Emborg. "I think that was a large part of what gave us the courage to take the leap and start our own studio. Working at a big company like IO-Interactive, you always report to someone, who in turn reports to someone else, all the way up the chain. Being independent means that we report to no one, which is a whole other way of making games. We could literally decide to include magic spells in Echo tomorrow if we felt that would make for a better game. We're constantly reacting to the game we're making, and it feels like a more natural way to work."

Echo follows a girl called En, who arrives in a mysterious architectural marvel known as the Palace. Emborg isn't giving too much away about its origins or

who our mysterious heroine is. "Often the protagonist is an 'empty vessel' or a regular person who has to figure out what has happened in a mysterious place," he teases. "In Echo, one of the mysteries is En herself. As she is trying to figure out the Palace and how to reach her goal, the player is trying to figure out En and the circumstances that brought her to the Palace in the first place."

Clone ranger

It's in the Palace where you're going to learn how you play games. It creates exact copies of En called Echoes who mimic the way you play. Run and these mimics will get speedier, bring out your gun and things aren't going to be peaceful anymore. "You will definitely have to stay dynamic in your play style, but that will soon feel natural as you settle into the rhythm of the game, so to speak," Emborg explains. "I really feel like



Ultra Ultra is excited by the possibilities for indie devs: "Unreal Engine 4 allows anyone to start producing games of a high complexity and polish from day one."

"BRING OUT YOUR GUN AND THINGS AREN'T GOING TO BE PEACEFUL ANYMORE"

FIND
MORE
FREE
MAGAZINES

FREEMAGS.CC



Echo is currently only confirmed for PC, although Ultra Ultra has said it will also appear on consoles – but they're yet to announce which. So don't be surprised when it turns up on Xbox One and PS4.



While taking on evil versions of yourself is the primary challenge, there's a mysterious narrative to reveal as well.

Echo is a game that makes you think in a very different way about your choices, to the point where when playing other games I sometimes find myself being super careful about doing things that have absolutely no consequence in whatever game I'm playing."

Interestingly, the Palace goes through cycles where the clones learn your behaviours. Almost like a computer reboot, there's a period of blackout time where you can misbehave to your heart's content as you explore. But it comes at a cost. "Those brief periods of darkness are your free pass to do whatever you want without the Palace seeing it, but the blackouts only happen when you diverge from the current Echoes, so you have to teach them something to get that free pass," explains Emborg. "The blackout cycle and mimicking mechanic kind of works as a puzzle element that you manage on the

fly, trying to wield it to your benefit, and a large part of that is definitely doing the more dangerous things in the dark."

Hitman down

The Palace itself is beautiful, with endless pillars and high ceilings. The team wanted something that would mix the ancient and mythical with the modern day. "Palaces in real life, like Versailles, are just insane pieces of architecture. I was aware of them, but after having done a lot of research I have a completely renewed sense of awe at the crazy complexity and sheer craftsmanship," he says. "But we wanted the Palace to have its own language, so we went about experimenting with combining different aesthetics. One of the primary ones being art deco, with its patterns and stark angles that very easily turns into something that feels like technology."



And if you think playing against yourself sounds hard, it is. But beating yourself at your own game sounds like a satisfying exercise in pain. "We were quite nervous about how people would react to the experience, but fortunately I can say that the reactions have been overwhelmingly positive! It turned out that almost everyone dies pretty quickly when they try it for the first time, but then they 'get' it and proceed to do very well, and have a great time with it."

While there's definitely influences from a certain red tied, black-suited assassin, the team is carrying their roots into the realms of the unreal. "Of course contributing to the Hitman games has made it part of our DNA, but Echo is not evolved from Hitman," Emborg confirms. "We're making science-fiction instead of something set in a version of the real world, which I guess could be described as an evolution of some kind. That allows us to incorporate game design into the visual and narrative language of the reality we're creating."

We love the high concept here, and with incredible visuals and a mysterious premise, we're looking forward to having some time to reflect. ■



The 60 Second Pitch

Avoiding the clones with **Martin Emborg**

“After one hundred years in stasis, the girl and protagonist En arrives at her destination: a Palace of the old civilization aeons gone. Out here she hopes to bring back a life that should not have been lost... In Echo everything has a consequence: the Palace studies everything you do, everything you are, to use it against you. It creates Echoes, exact copies of you, that do the things you do. So the way you play informs and shapes your enemy. If you run, soon the Echoes get faster. If you sneak, they get stealthier. If you shoot, they will start to shoot back. The game constantly reacts to your every choice and input. The Palace reboots every few minutes, resulting in a blackout. This is when the Echoes get updated with your latest behaviour, learning and unlearning from your actions. During the blackout the Palace is in a temporary state of blindness, giving you the freedom to act without consequence and do the things you don't want the Echoes to learn. You need to keep a cool head as you face the ultimate enemy: Yourself.”

IndieMaster

The **Best** Of The Indie Scene!

Format PS4, PC Developer AEIOWU ETA Spring 2017 Web <http://bit.ly/gmtumbleseed>

#2 TUMBLESEED

You've got to roll with grit

If most of your experience with seeds stems (sorry) from experiments with a Venus flytrap starter kit that some bright spark decided to buy you as something different at Christmas, you'll be used to the disappointment of killing something before it can even take its first breath of carbon dioxide. In a way you've already reached a state of true permadeath with vegetation. Well, at least you'll be able to hit restart in the rather delightful looking and hyper-colourful self-professed 'rolly roguelike', *Tumbleseed*.

Taking to a mountainside as a mere seedling, you'll have to scale its heady heights in a quest to rid it of an infection that means monsters have taken over and are ruining your happy sprouting existence. Its bright colours might scream platformer, but don't be fooled – this is actually a fiendish roguelike. "The most attractive thing about the genre is just the possibility space," explains developer Benedict Fritz. "Most of us are Spelunky people, and having a game still be new and exciting on the 500th run is just so insanely cool."

Plantman

While constantly climbing the mountain and rolling out of the way of hazards will take up one half of your brain, you're going to have to grow green fingers too. "Planting is *TumbleSeed*'s item system, decision-making system, and enemy encounter system all in one," Fritz says. "There are plots of fertile soil all over the mountain. As a seed, rolling over a plot plants something. What gets planted depends on which seed type you have equipped. Do you plant a checkpoint so you don't fall to the

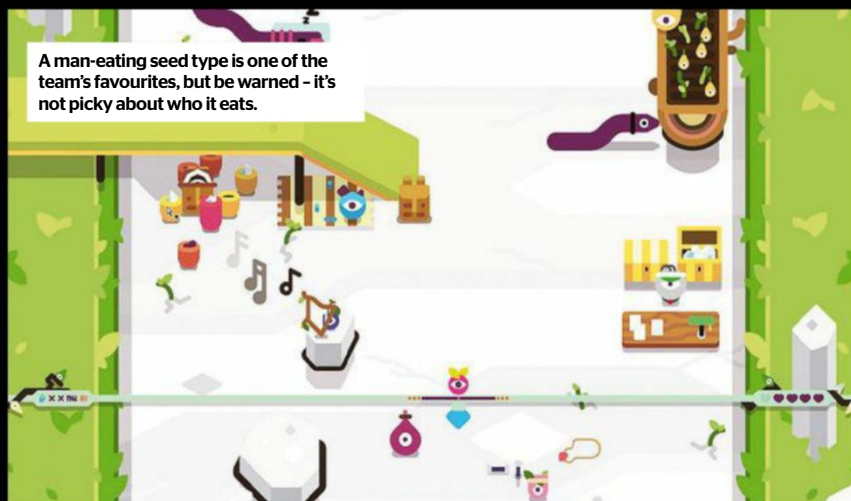


The difficulty climbs as you clamber further up the mountain, but we'll apparently quickly find favourite seed abilities to use against monsters.

bottom of the mountain? Or do you plant a thorn so you can attack enemies? There's also a real opportunity cost to these choices – planting a checkpoint to play it safe means you don't get the benefit of playing more greedily."

Like a deadly version of Swiss cheese, the mountain is covered in perfectly circular holes that spell game over for an intrepid seed adventurer. These can be filled in if you get a specific ability to call in a raincloud and plant a shrub but they're also to blame for the lovely art style of the game. While the colours are inspired by indies like *Fez* and *Hohokum*, everything else is all about these perfect pits. "I wanted to keep things very rounded feeling because of our one constant: holes," explains Fritz. "We always knew we'd have holes in the game since we were originally inspired by *Ice Cold Beer*, an old mechanical arcade cabinet featuring a ball, a bar, and a bunch of holes to avoid. Holes are always round, so it made sense to listen to that a bit and not force a look that was too edgy and sharp that would unnaturally contrast with the circular forms."

With the ability to plant man-eating seeds, gorgeous visuals, and a console release, we can't wait to, er, seed more. ■



A man-eating seed type is one of the team's favourites, but be warned – it's not picky about who it eats.

Small... But Perfectly Formed

Unique indies to try on PlayStation VR



#1

JOB SIMULATOR

It's not like all we do every day is work – it's about time that gaming was full of menial tasks. With a Move wand in each hand, you'll be immersed in a world where tasks include building sandwiches, staffing a convenience store, and even making the perfect office coffee – each with its own chaotic twist.



#2

THUMPER

Self-proclaimed by dev team Drol as being "completely overwhelming" in VR, this 'rhythm violence' game in which a metal beetle speeds ever onwards towards shrieking boss monsters is nothing short of an assault on the eyes and ears... er, in a good way. Check out our full review on p79.



#3

TETHERED

Inspired by the visuals of Studio Ghibli movies, this open-world survival strategy game has been specifically built to be experienced in VR. It might look altogether too cute and charming for its own good, but survival is the order of the day and there's a village to build and creatures of the night to battle.



#4

WAYWARD SKY

This ultra pretty puzzler neatly dodges any VR sickness with an ingenious camera-switching mode that lets you jump effortlessly between first- and third-person. Puzzles are in first-person, but you'll move pilot Bess via handy bird's-eye view, so there should be no need for anti-nausea tablets.



#5

GNOG

Anything that starts with 'in a world full of monster heads' should be a rollicking story, right? Every, well, noggin in *Gnog* is filled with intricate puzzles to solve and a unique soundtrack. The small team at Ko-op has crafted a fascinating world that we just can't get out of our heads. Too cool for skull.



Format XO, PC Dev Monotheitic ETA Spring 2017 Web <http://bit.ly/gmbeacon>

#3 BEACON

There's a roguelike that never goes out

Perhaps there's something in the indie water. You go weeks with nothing but survival sims, and then two amazing roguelikes come along at once. Whereas usually in the genre you're doing everything you can to avoid death, *Beacon* has a touch of *Rogue Legacy* about it, and practically encourages you to end your life on its harsh planet to see what will happen next. Why, you ask? Ready your microscope. It's time to analyse some DNA.

"The premise of *Beacon* is that you play a survivor of a crashed spaceship, forced to clone herself again and again to try to find a way off the planet," explains writer Joseph Russell. "Any enemy has a chance to drop a DNA fragment on death, each with their own associated statistics. As you continue your 'run', you'll be collecting these fragments and storing them. Then, should you die before you reach the end of the game, you'll be presented with the

interface on the clone bay, asking you to choose which DNA fragments you want to integrate with your own for the next run."

Skinny genes

Although you're armed with a gun, you don't want to finish in one run as DNA can mean all kinds of bonus features. You could start with more health or up your speed at the expense of stamina, or be brave and risk bigger changes. "With the DNA system, you'll be building up your statistics over consecutive runs, with the potential for more drastic changes happening in the form of mutations," Russell warns. "These are semi-permanent disfigurements of the player character, which have more drastic effects on the gameplay, both positive and negative. As a result, if you're not careful with the choices you make in the DNA selection, you could find yourself stepping out of the clone bay with horns, scales, or worse."

This is no ordinary sci-fi shooter and it's out fairly soon - early next year and you'll be on your clone... ■



The brilliant synthwave soundtrack is from in-house audio master Arran Seaton, and you can listen now on the game's SoundCloud page.



Format PC Developer BURR ETA Summer 2018 Web <http://bit.ly/gmlonggonedays>

#4 LONG GONE DAYS

Ready war not, here it comes

Wherever we go in games, we just automatically know the language, like we're armed with a handy in-ear

Babelfish. Refreshingly, this dystopian RPG's need for translators isn't the only thing that has us intrigued. The story of *Rourke*, a soldier from a facility deep below the Earth's surface called the Core, is a different kind of military tale.

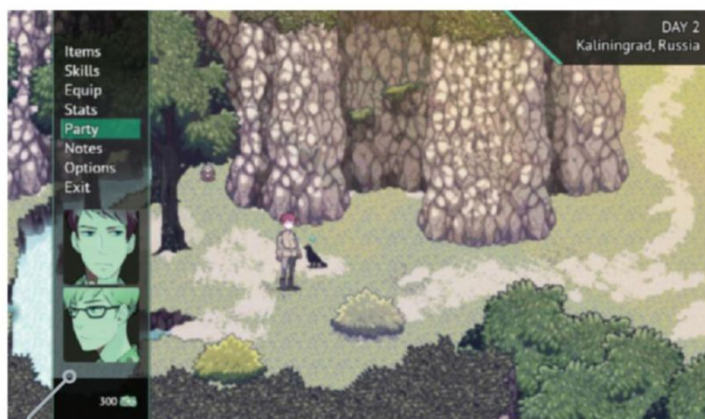
The work of one woman since 2003, inspired by dystopian literature, *Long Gone Days* has evolved from a small project to an IndieGogo-funded full game in 2016. Focused fully on narrative, it doesn't have the random

encounters of traditional RPGs, but instead a set story as *Rourke* explores the politically unstable world above the Core. Members of your party don't level up, but are gifted with new skills to help them attempt to stop imminent war.

Speak time

Your team learn other languages and equip new items to progress. You need to keep group morale up to make sure everyone's happy to fight. Each character has different personality traits too, so you've got a complex emotional roller coaster to ride. Add in multiple combat modes, including a sniper cam on top of a traditional turn-based set up, and this looks like a beautiful 2D RPG with a dark heart. ■

"THE STORY OF ROURKE IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF MILITARY TALE"



Lone developer Camila Gormaz is clear that this is an RPG with no magic or supernatural elements. Science and technology rule.

GM Reviews

The Final Verdict!

62 Forza Horizon 3



Microsoft's series heads Down Under. Ben takes it for a spin to see if it's a didgeridoo or a didgeridon't.

HOW WE SCORE

0-39 Awful Avoid it as you would a bullet with your name on.
40-59 Poor Major issues here that won't be solved with a hug.
60-69 Decent A mixed bag filled with sweets and sharp stones.
70-79 Good Some flaws, but still a very enjoyable experience.
80-89 Excellent Buy it, love it, thank us when you're done.
90-100 Outstanding A rare and essential piece of brilliance.

The small print: We rate games in comparison to what else is available on the same system, in the same genre, and for the same format at the time of release. So this year's FIFA might score less than a FIFA from three years ago, but still be a better game. Because time, and our expectations, move on. Hey, you're smart, you get it...



Not awarded based simply on score, but rather given to games that possess a special blend of qualities. For instant classics that you won't regret owning.





Football. Football never changes. Or does it? It's time for us to review EA's annual ball kicker. Goooooal!



The timeless task of killing stuff passes from father to son. But is this still the daddy of cover shooters?



Nothing to do with the rabbit from Bambi. Everything to do with an audio-visual assault on your brain.

Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PC Publisher 2K Games Developer Hangar 13 ETA Out now Players 1

MAFIA III

2K's mob sequel starts strong, but you'll soon feel as though you've been there, *don* that

T

he mob boss we've just gunned down has her back to the wall, sat in a growing pool of her own blood. "There was always something terribly romantic about all of this," she says, wincing through the pain. Our protagonist, Lincoln Clay, looks down

on the dying woman in disbelief. "There ain't nothing romantic about robbing and killing people," he spits back. "Well, maybe not," she replies. "But it certainly was exciting." The woman's right, of course, but with her final breath she forgets to mention the humdrum monotony that punctuates the bursts of organised criminal fun.

But Mafia III's opening act offers no hint of the creeping tedium to come, beginning with a series of rather brilliant little bust-ups that forgo open-world freedom in favour of crafted linearity. And the fundamentals are all solid - shooting is agreeably snappy, driving's a drift joy, and stealth quickly emerges as a surprisingly serviceable approach to most mission types. The use of superbly stylish cutscenes, which feature supporting characters as talking heads commenting on the events of the game, as if it were a history documentary, prove efficient vehicles for narrative exposition without resorting to clunky explanation.

Of course, the common thread uniting these pre-rendered talking heads is Lincoln Clay, a Vietnam veteran whose

surrogate father happens to be the ageing head of New Bordeaux's black mob. And when this mentor is betrayed in a cruel double-cross, Lincoln finds himself at war with a large and well-funded criminal syndicate.

US of Clay

If that all sounds like the stuff of a staid revenge drama, it's worth noting that Mafia III is enlivened no end by its choice of setting. New Bordeaux is modelled on 1968 New Orleans, but while the city itself might be fictional, its politics and tensions are upsettingly real. In its depictions of the racism and bigotry of the Southern United States, Mafia III is often shockingly brave, pulling few punches in an industry that's often noted for how safe it plays.

As such, your player character will not only endure a steady barrage of blows and bullets as he goes about his business, but also of racial slurs and casual discrimination. The intensely racist reality of sixties America is even folded into the gameplay itself, as bigoted store owners will chase you from their premises, and police forces will take noticeably longer to respond to crimes reported in poor, black neighbourhoods. And developer Hangar 13's depiction of race relations is way more nuanced than you might expect, with characters of every colour and creed driven by prejudice and poverty to exploit and demean America's black population.

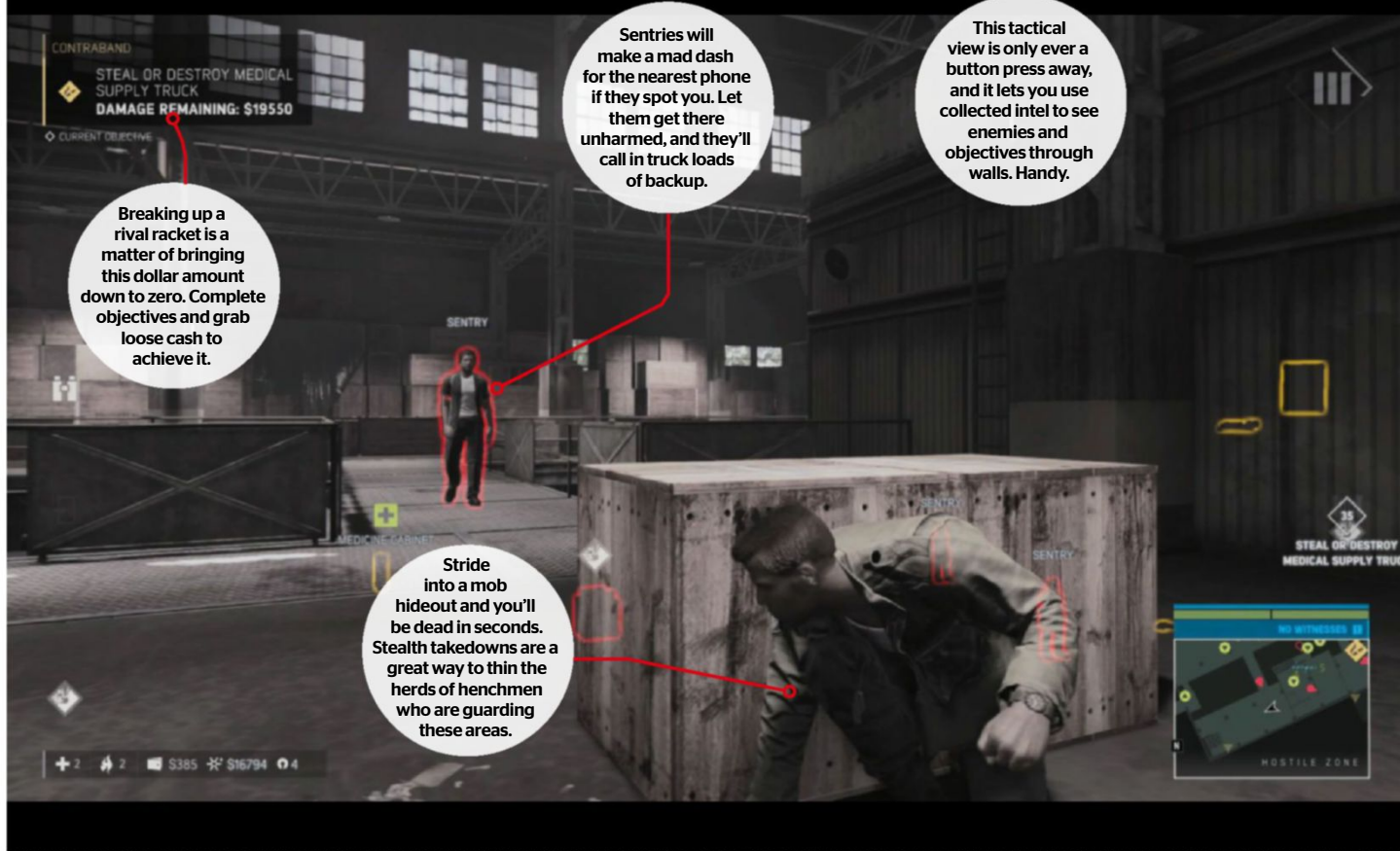
Mafia III is adult not only in the sense that it's incredibly profane, then, but also in its refusal to offer up unambiguously good characters. Lincoln Clay is a sympathetic protagonist, but he's also a calculating murderer. His white CIA contact John Donovan admires Clay, but is happy to spew slurs relating to any number of other ethnicities. Even the

"LINCOLN CLAY IS A SYMPATHETIC PROTAGONIST, BUT HE'S ALSO A CALCULATING MURDERER"



MAKING A RACKET

The GM guide to muscling out the criminal competition



TRIPLE TROUBLE

As you take over New Bordeaux's sleazy rackets and city districts, you'll be able to hand them over to one of your three criminal allies to manage. In return, they'll provide you with nifty gear and cash kickbacks. Meet the gang.



The ruthless Cassandra heads up the Haitian mob, and styles herself as a mysterious voodoo queen.



Vito Scaletta is a made man and returning protagonist of Mafia II, but he's been betrayed by the local mafia.



Thomas Burke is the hard-drinking head of the Irish mob, and a marvelous mechanic to boot.

"THERE'S ENOUGH VARIETY TO KEEP THE FIRST DOZEN HOURS EXCITING, BUT REPETITION SOON SINKS IN"

Mafia III's approach to open-world game design, however, brings to mind nothing so readily as the original Assassin's Creed. Ubisoft's first stab at sandbox stealth also boasted a remarkable world (for 2007), but often limited player activity to template missions - eavesdrop on these rotters, interrogate that cad, pickpocket this chump - that were repeated over and over against different backdrops. And while Mafia III never asks you to base jump into a hay bale, it adopts much the same approach, presenting players with similar objectives time and time again.

So, in order to draw out one of the game's mob lieutenants or mafia kingpins, you'll have to hit them where it hurts and disrupt the flow of illicit cash being generated by their felonious operations. In practice, that might mean rubbing out their enforcers, torching their black market merchandise, or stealing shady shipments from guarded warehouses. Put enough of a dent in your target's bank account, and they'll be forced to mosey on over to New Bordeaux to bash some underling skulls together. And while there's enough mission variety on offer to keep the first

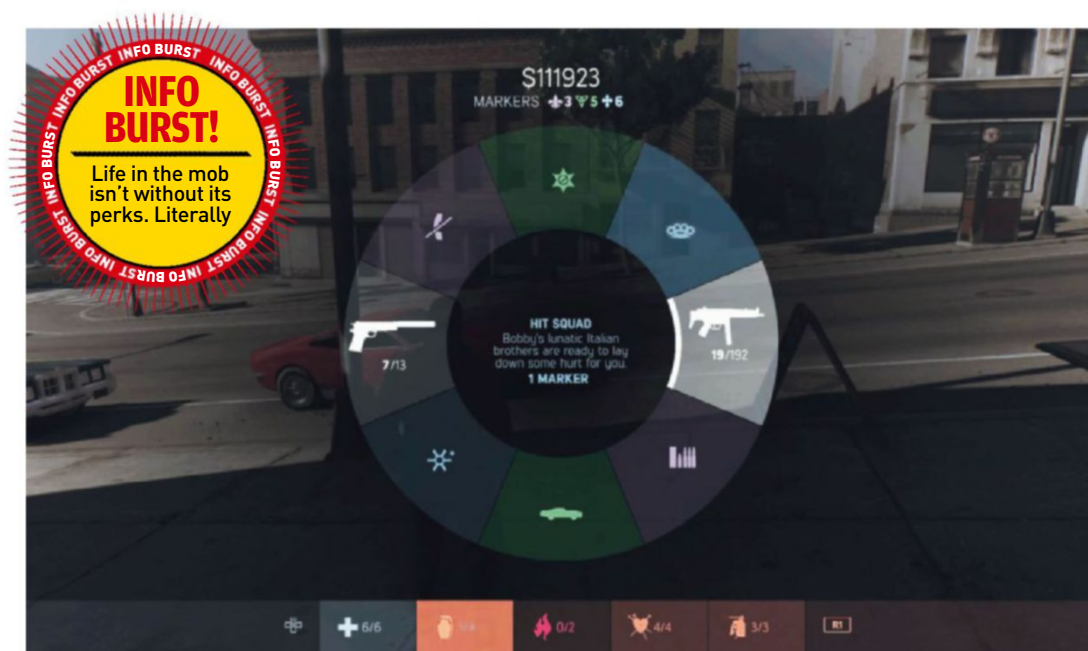
dozen hours of Mafia III exciting, a grinding sense of monotonous repetition soon sinks in. Teasing a foe out of hiding might require you to tackle five or six of these cookie-cutter missions, and once you've seen them all a few times before, you might just find yourself driving impatiently around the city on box-ticking exercises.

Once you've ruffled enough feathers, the local Big Bad will finally come out of hiding long enough for you to make a move on their life. But, while a handful of the most significant hits are given a bespoke treatment, the majority of these encounters see you schlepping back to locations you've already visited. It's something of a galling experience, expertly clearing a supermarket of racist goons, only to find yourself tackling the exact same bigoted bodega just a few minutes later.

priest from Lincoln's childhood orphanage turned to God only in the hopes of atoning for the bloodshed he inflicted during the Second World War. Hangar 13 has created a city that's caked in blood and grime, and there's little sense that your quest for revenge will improve matters much.

Sense of place

Key to this evocation of period is the superb soundtrack, which assembles a host of bona fide classics for Mafia III's radio stations. You'll outrun cops to the smooth sound of The Temptations, ram dealers off the road as Aretha Franklin wails from the speakers, and find yourself shoosed out of segregated diners while The Beach Boys croon in the background. While so many videogame open worlds feel like soulless copies of New York, New Bordeaux feels distinctly different.



Hold the phones

This handy perk lets Lincoln call a sympathetic operator to shut down all the phones in a local area. It might sound unglamorous, but cutting the phone lines is a guaranteed way to close communication and ensure that pesky witnesses can't rat you out to the police and mob sentries won't be able to call for back-up if they spot you lurking around their lairs.

Hit parade

Our old friend Vito Scaletta of Mafia II fame may be out of favour with the Italian mob, but he still has all sorts of influence and useful contacts in the criminal underworld. Bobby Navarro is a perfect case in point, and you can call on the services of this hardened hitman when you need to even the odds against a particularly tricky adversary.

I fought the law

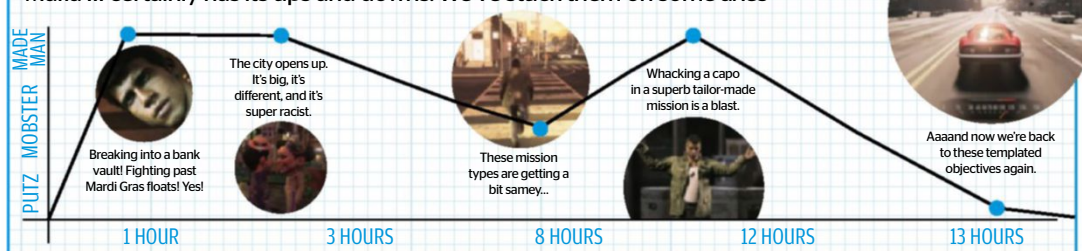
Thomas Burke has a friend in the New Bordeaux Police Department, and once old Tommy enters your employ, you'll be able to call on his inside-woman should you attract any unwanted attention from law enforcement. Just say the word, and you'll find that the boys in blue don't drive nearly so hard or far in pursuit anymore.

Valet parking

Jacking a car can be a risky business in Mafia III, so the vehicle delivery service is one rather nifty perk to have at your disposal, allowing Lincoln to simply ring up his contact and request one of the cars from his collection. You'll unlock new motors as you progress, and your gearhead underling will deliver them to you anywhere on the map.

GAME OF GRAPHS

Mafia III certainly has its ups and downs. We've stuck them on some axes



By the time you've murdered and maimed your way through 30 hours of Mafia III's campaign, these shortcuts and seams are painfully visible, and you'll still have a way to go before claiming victory over your mobster rivals. Given the tremendous strength of New Bordeaux as a setting, it's a shame that the developer felt the need to include such blatant filler. And then there are the bugs, which often range from silly to serious in the course of a single session. A tense shootout might be accompanied by the sight of an enemy corpse shuddering its way across the alleyway, twisting and jerking as it slides around the asphalt. On one occasion, we rubbed out a local mob lieutenant, only to watch as his clothing textures spread out to occupy most of the screen.

And then there was the time that a building facade was briefly replaced by a

garish mess of green digital artfacting, creating a visual effect that brought to mind Ceefax more readily than the American South. That's only a handful of glitches across several dozen hours with the game, yes, but they weren't exactly subtle hiccups. And even when the game is running just as it should, you can still expect some very noticeable texture pop-in as you career across the city in your stolen sixties supercar.

Goon squad

New Bordeaux still manages to be strikingly attractive at times, as the searing midday sun shines on the crocodile-infested bayou or night descends on the vibrant French Quarter. And while character models are a little uneven, the best are truly superb - and they're backed by some excellent vocal performances and convincing

animations. At other times, however, the heavy-handed use of bloom effects makes it genuinely difficult to drive down a wet street at dusk, so consider picking up a pair of sunglasses along with your copy of the game.

Mafia III is not what you'd call a polished game, then, but these quirks are easily forgiven for the opportunity to inhabit a city that's as distinctive and richly realised as New Bordeaux. The reliance on filler and repeated mission types, however, is less forgivable, and it's hard to imagine that any but the most occasional of players won't eventually reach the limits of their patience. Perhaps we should have adjusted our expectations to be more in line with Clay's. "There ain't nothing romantic about robbing and killing people." In this case, he's kind of right. We just wish he was wrong a bit more often. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ An excellent opening establishes strong action fundamentals.
- ✓ The choice of setting feels like fresh ground for gaming.
- ✓ The soundtrack is brilliant and suitably evocative of the period.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Templated missions mean a dull sense of repetition soon sets in.

Better than...



Watch Dogs

Ubisoft's much-hyped sandbox hack-a-thon proved disappointing at release, and time has only dulled Aiden Pearce's already-limited appeal.

Worse than...



Grand Theft Auto V

Rockstar's open-world epic manages to combine peerless scale with a sense of authored care, creating the greatest open-world game of the generation.

i NEED TO KNOW

Mafia III was originally announced by series developer 2K Czech. Shortly after that studio was closed in 2014, Hangar 13 was founded in California and started work on the project.

GM JUDGEMENT

69%



Amazing setting and stylish narrative let down by a dull and painfully repetitive open-world structure.
James Nouch

GM Review

The Final Verdict!

There are several driver avatars, and your handler actually speaks aloud whatever name you select for them.



FREAK MOTORSHOW

Our six most ridiculous custom vehicles

Some of the included 350 cars are born weird, while others have weirdness forcibly thrust upon them.



Format XO (reviewed), PC Pub Microsoft Studios Dev Playground Games ETA Out now Players 1-12

FORZA HORIZON 3

Sun, sea, and M83 as motormania hits the land down under



Australia might be the perfect place for an open-world racer.

The weather's lovely, the accents are cool, and it's

pretty bloody big. Yet in Playground Games' take on Oz it takes mere minutes to drive between scorched outback, muddy rainforest, glittering shoreline, and bustling city. And as manager of the latest Horizon Festival – a vehicular love-in that's basically a drugless Burning Man for motors – you get to experience everything the condensed paradisaal continent has to offer from the comfort of a cockpit.

The aim is completing media-hyping events to earn fans and expand into new

territories, thereby unlocking more exhibitions and exposure. It's little wonder people are gawking when diversions range from blasting American muscle cars down gorgeous coasts, drifting around dusty trails as fireworks burst, and occasionally facing off against the odd steam train. Horizon 3 is a thrill ride from the get-go.

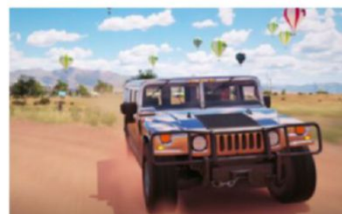
Sheila's wheels

Activities are spread across a world map apparently double Horizon 2's size, and are initiated by driving up to them. This isn't as annoying as it sounds, thanks to their ubiquity and your ability to ask handler/GPS Anna to set a route using the D-pad. Leisurely PR challenges contain speed zones (reach a set speed within an area), drift zones (get sideways

around a series of bends), speed cameras (bolt past the camera), skill runs (drive stylishly for points), and danger signs (ramp off the sign and get air), while more traditional routes feature circuits, multi-stage championships, time trials against leaderboard ghosts, and point-to-points. Best is the Bucket List.

Morbidly, this references 30 one-off challenges to complete before you kick the bucket, such as 'Hoon around the gold mine in a Bowler EXR S' and 'Hold your nerve and reach 250 MPH in the Hennessey Venom'. By varying location, music, vehicle and objective, each one feels radically different. One challenge takes place to a cheeky saxophone score, for instance, while another is set on an airplane runway to the theme from 2001: A Space Odyssey. Dramatic.

Thanks to Blueprint mode you can make your own, picking the discipline, the car, the conditions, and the beat before sharing it online. As a result, you're never forced into a style of play. Don't like the event? Tweak it. Regrettably, you can only select existing routes rather than

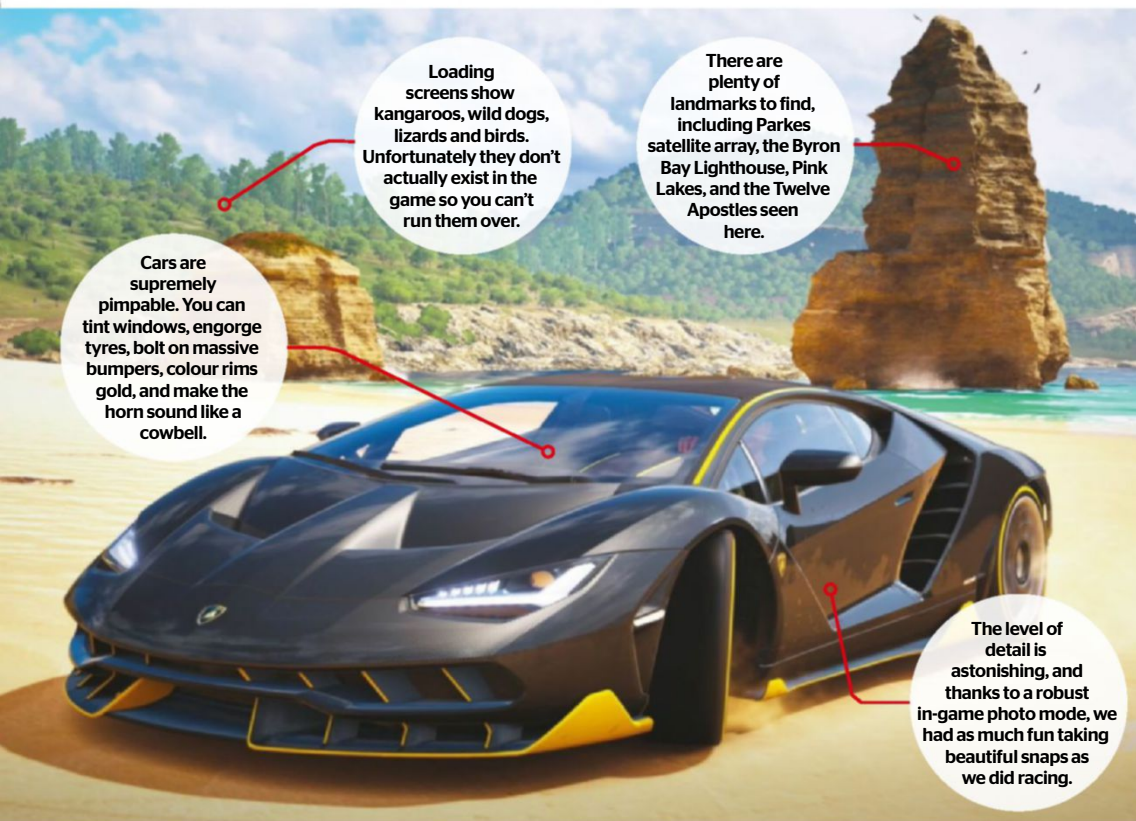


RADIO GA GA

Horizon 3 knows how to use the power of music

There are eight radio stations to choose from when tearing round Australia, with a mix of synthpop, electronica, rap, rock, house, and metal, and featuring artists such as Years & Years, The 1975, Chvrches, Blink-182, Beastie Boys, Lykke Li, and Beethoven. As you complete races and gain clout in the Horizon festival, you're able to sign them all. Playground Games shows a keen understanding of music's power to shape and elevate experiences and moments, from a night-time drift around a city as a soft electronica beat pulses, to a mad jungle charge accompanied by Run-DMC's It's Tricky. Tracks always seems to fit the time and place, giving a much greater sense of both, and the occasional radio static is a nice touch as well.

"COMPARED TO FORZA 6'S PRESSURE COOKER ENVIRONMENT, THIS IS A LAID-BACK GAP YEAR OF A GAME"



carve out your own, and in a space this large it feels somewhat of a waste. No cross-country cannonball runs for you.

Varied terrain also presents a new problem - you can race any car on any track, even if they're not very compatible. At one point we hop in a hefty Hummer H1 Alpha for a straight motorway dash seemingly meant for something more Ferrari-shaped. All that's needed to prevent wasted time is a little pop-up saying, 'Yeah, probably the wrong choice'. Instead, you're left to figure it out.

It's rare bad form from a racer otherwise bursting with inclusivity, one that lets you dial competitors' difficulty down, assists up, and enable both driving lines and rewinds to play like a bumper-to-bumper arcade game, but with simulation foundations robust enough to accurately model tyre pressure, brake balance, gearing, damping, and differential, you know, if you fancy drilling down. Wins aren't required - higher places just earn you more fans. Compared to Forza 6's pressure cooker track environment, this is a laid-back gap year of a game.

Trackmanian devil

Between frequent level-ups you'll court Lady Luck and spin a Wheel Of Fortune for cash and car prizes. Rapidly-accruing points, meanwhile, are spent on skills (earn multipliers for clean racing - flag

songs on the radio for score boosts when they play), instant rewards (Fans shower the street as you drive by. Get an instant 100,000 cash), and perks of being the boss, like importing horns that play Ode To Joy, piloting a drone to reveal points of interest, and a photo feature that financially incentivises snapping new cars. There's always something to do, whether it's smashing XP signs, visiting designated beauty spots, finding battered classic motors in barns to restore, or spontaneously joining an AI convoy en route to your destination.

That's even before we get to the Autoshow, a base to buy, sell, customise, and upgrade over 350 rides (150 more than Horizon 2). With an online auction and car-ogling first-person Forzavista mode it feels like the celebration's epicentre. You can paint a Land Rover in polished brass with wooden rims then pop the hood and peek at the immaculately modelled engine. You can download user-created liveries (we find an Aston Martin branded with the words 'YOLO swag' and a Mini resembling Lightning McQueen). And you can take your creations to market like the proverbial cow. It all builds to the statement that cars in Horizon 3 aren't just for racing. They are for pimping, for perving over, and for profiting from.

Of course, they're also for pushing to the limit against others, and aside from

the glaring lack of split-screen, 12-person multiplayer is well-integrated: there's Online Adventure in which players vote on a steady stream of events, Online Freeroam which is taken at your own pace, and for the first time a co-op campaign that, in letting up to four friends progress through the central story, gives your actions fresh meaning. You can also start or join a club for more tailored competition, using tags such as 'relaxed', 'pro' and 'worldwide' to state your intent and picking from a list of like-minded drivers to challenge. What the game excels at is making the experience feel social whether you're online or off, with radio DJs dishing up-to-the-minute gossip, Anna detailing new events, and menus feeding rolling recommendations on Autoshow deals.

In sunny Australia, Playground Games throws shade on regular racers. Why navigate closed circuits when you could chart a boundless country? More cultivation would have helped prevent using cars on tracks not designed for them, and there's inconsistency with authentically-handling vehicles that still crash like they're surrounded by force-fields, but this doesn't spoil what's essentially a big, sub-equatorial extravaganza glorifying lush landscapes, good music, spirited competition, and going very fast in a fleet of exquisitely rendered cars. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ A bountiful assortment of cars and events for all occasions.
- ✓ Expertly uses music to amplify and transform the experience.

GM HATES...

- ✗ You're never told which track suits which type of car.
- ✗ Sluggish crashes and dull damage kill the vibe.

Better than...



Forza Horizon 2

The setting is more vibrant, the car list is heaving, the soundtrack rocks, and the atmosphere buzzes. Horizon 3 simply feels more electric.

Worse than...



Grand Theft Auto V

Rockstar's sandbox also features seamless cross-country driving, but has the added bonus of being able to throw grenades out the window.

i NEED TO KNOW



Thanks to Microsoft's Play Anywhere initiative, buy this for Xbox One via the Xbox Store and you also own it on PC. Ta-dah! Simply sign into the Windows Store to download the PC version.

GM JUDGEMENT

88%



Fuelled by a semi-simulator brain and arcade heart, Horizon 3 is a very g'day indeed.
Ben Griffin

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Format 3DS Publisher Nintendo Developer Nd Cube ETA Out now Players 1-4

MARIO PARTY: STAR RUSH

Nintendo throws a portable bash worth showing up for

Digital board games have always been best suited to home consoles - four players squashed on the sofa, digging one another in the ribs after lucky throws and underhanded tricks. Even so, that only partly explains why Mario's portable shindigs have been so underwhelming. Until now. Star Rush is hardly GOTY, but it's definitely one of 2016's most unlikely surprises.

The smartest move Nintendo makes is to ditch the traditional board game format. There are still boards of a form in the new Toad Scramble mode, but they're much roomier than usual, and all players roll and move at the same time. Your goal is to earn stars by defeating bosses - you'll collect coins, bonus items and AI allies (who give extra dice and assist in minigames) before landing on the boss square to trigger the fight. All other players then have to mash buttons to catch up as the battle minigame begins.

It adds a pinch of strategy - do you tackle the boss before everyone's ready, or show up late with some hired help and give yourself a better shot at glory later?

Rush money

Coinathlon is even better, and tailor-made for quick sessions, such that it works equally well in a group and for lone players on their daily commute. Minigames are grouped into threes, and task you with grabbing as many coins as you can, your tally equating to the number of spaces you'll move around the circuit. The clock's ticking all the while, which keeps things moving as you're launched from one minigame to the next, and once you've completed enough laps, the game's over. You'll probably be done in less than five minutes, but if you're playing on your own and fancy carrying on, you can immediately take on more opponents at a tougher difficulty setting.

Balloon Bash fares less well, not least since it's the mode where CPU opponents are most prone to the kind of bald-faced

cheating we've come to expect from Mario Party over the years.

Last and most definitely least is Rhythm Recital, which adopts a similar format to cult multiplayer classic Jam With The Band by having you parping along to classic Nintendo tunes. Alas, the note-matching core is laughably simplistic, and your accompaniment to the fixed backing track always ends up sounding like a very under-rehearsed primary school orchestra.

You'll earn more modes and characters as you go, with a system that rewards you for playing any game type - rather than forcing you to plug away at modes or boards you don't like purely in the pursuit of a specific unlockable you're desperate to grab. It's a considerate touch, as is the Party Guest option which lets other players join in without needing their own copy of the game.

All this would be for nothing if Star Rush didn't have a solid selection of minigames, and while there are some duffers (like every other Mario Party), they're a decent bunch, with some entertainingly inventive boss fights and challenges that would pass as throwaway asides in one of the recent 3D Mario games. It's never going to capture the competitive thrill of going head-to-head on your TV screen, but as handheld get-togethers go, this isn't half bad. ■

"SOME CHALLENGES COULD PASS FOR THROWAWAY ASIDES IN ONE OF THE RECENT 3D MARIO GAMES"

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Coinathlon mode drops the downtime and cuts to the chase.
- ✓ A generally higher quality of minigame...

GM HATES...

- ✗ ...though there are less of them compared to past entries.
- ✗ Computer opponents will make you swear like a sailor.

Better than...



Mario Party: Island Tour

Almost entirely lacking in that special Nintendo magic, Star Rush's predecessor is so perfunctory it's no wonder it forced a rethink.

Worse than...



Super Smash Bros For Nintendo 3DS

A miracle of engineering and still the gold standard for fun, competitive multiplayer games on 3DS.

NEED TO KNOW



Seven amiibo figures, due out in early November, are compatible with Star Rush. In Toad Scramble, they come with special dice - DK's, for example, has four zeroes and two 10s.

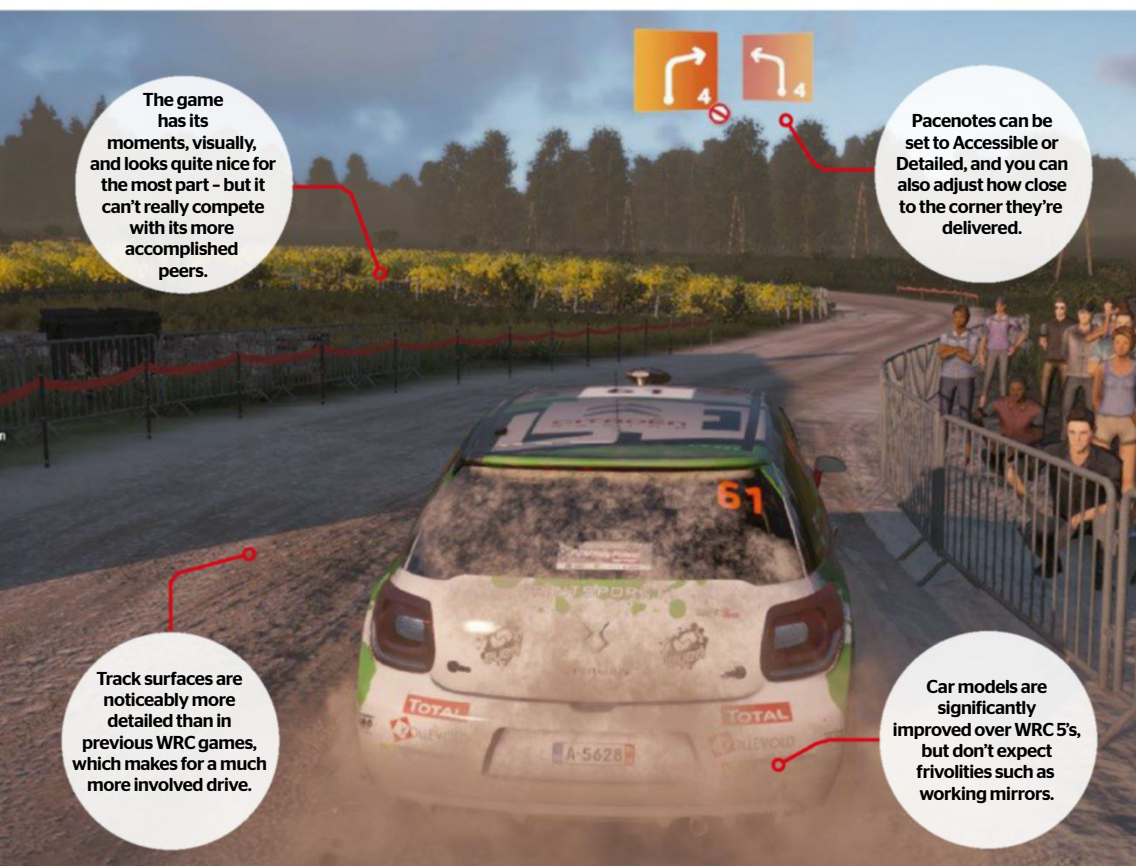
GM JUDGEMENT

75%



It's inherently limited by the handheld format, but this is a smart reinvention of a faltering series.
Chris Schilling

Why are only four Toads invited to Mario's parties? Because otherwise there wouldn't be much room for the other guests.



Format PS4, XO (reviewed), PC Publisher Bigben Interactive Developer Kylotonn ETA Out now Players 1-2

WRC 6

Crashes to smashes, Dirt to dust

Real-world rally teams are missing a trick. The cars in WRC 6 are spectacularly robust - it doesn't matter how hard or fast you hit rocks, logs, or brick walls, none of those body panels or wheels are coming off. Why the FIA doesn't insist on its use during the WRC is beyond us - it would really cut down on repair costs. It also, along with some rather dodgy in-air physics, cuts down on spectacular crashes in WRC 6. Which is a shame given how much fun the game is when you're on the ground and not hitting anything.

It's an odd decision that is presumably intended to avoid WRC 5's issue of lost body parts revealing an unappealingly basic model beneath. But given how much better WRC 6's cars look, and how much detail is hinted at when examining them in the showroom, it's disappointing to encounter what feels like an even less desirable resource-saving shortcut in

place - cars feel bizarrely solid as a result, and you'll never get to heroically limp home on three wheels or trailing a bumper. There are other frustrations, too, such as the absence of any feedback on whether you're ahead or behind on a split, a cockpit view that's often too dark to be usable, and occasional trackside scenery contact that just feels a little off.

However, despite these niggling problems, WRC 6 is undoubtedly a huge step up from its predecessor, and makes up for many of its issues with its big-hearted design and delightful touches. Those cars - undamaged, at least - certainly look the part, and while environments aren't quite up to Dirt Rally's standards, there are some exceptional lighting and dust trail effects to distract from some aliasing issues and underwhelming textures. There's a great atmosphere as you progress through the single-player career, too, which makes you feel like you're part of a team pushing for leaderboard points - and clever touches such as the potential for a stage to be cancelled suddenly, because

of, say, another driver's car catching fire during their run, further bolster the overall sense of occasion.

Slide return

There's plenty of ground to cover, with 14 locations taking in just under 70 stages. Kylotonn has included some super special stages - these take place in stadiums and see two cars face-off on parallel tracks - which adds some welcome variety during event seasons. There are also time-limited online challenges as well as online, hot seat, and split-screen multiplayer modes (though, at the time of writing just after the game's release, we were unable to find any online sessions to join).

Thankfully, Kylotonn has nailed the most important aspect of a rally game, and car handling is both exciting and varied. It's more arcadey in feel when compared to Dirt Rally, but remains detailed and nuanced enough to keep you on your toes. Blasting through Finland's forests, a snow storm in Sweden, or across the arid surface of an Australian stage will raise both a smile and the hairs on the back of your neck.

WRC 6 is flawed but enjoyable. And while not quite able to keep pace with Codemasters' masterpiece, is a worthy companion piece for anyone who has room for two rally games in their life. ■

"CARS FEEL BIZARRELY SOLID AND YOU'LL NEVER GET TO LIMP HOME TRAILING A BUMPER"

What was the ratio of Ben's accidental impacts to his "damage model research" ones? Obviously, all crashes were intentional.

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Those dust clouds are a thing of mild wonder.
- ✓ It's thunderously enjoyable when you're in the zone.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Crashes and in-air physics feel outdated and clunky.
- ✗ The car selection can best be described as 'a bit boring'.

Better than...



Sébastien Loeb Rally Evo

It may have the name of the nine-time WRC champ, but Milestone's game falls even shorter of Dirt Rally's greatness.

Worse than...



Dirt Rally

Codemasters' rallying in the dirt may be brutally difficult, for sure, but it's still quite comfortably the best rally game ever made.

i NEED TO KNOW



Kylotonn has put a great deal of work into making its stages longer, bumpier, and narrower, and it's also reworked its audio with aggressive sounding results. Most satisfying.

GM JUDGEMENT

79%



A thoroughly enjoyable driving game let down by a number of frustrating shortcomings.
Ben Maxwell

GM Review

The Final Verdict!

Alex Hunter can play for any Premier League team of your choice, though bigger clubs mean less play time.

Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PC Publisher EA Sports Developer EA Canada ETA Out now Players 1-4

FIFA 17

Every journey begins with a small Pep talk

Wherever there's success, there's a story. That's a mantra the dominance of reality TV over the last decade has programmed into us. Whether you're talking about someone's rise from rags to riches on *The X Factor*, a baker suffering a soggy bottom in front of the nation on *The Great British Bake Off*, or a cataclysmic but ultimately financially fruitful few weeks on *Big Brother*, you can't make your mark in the public eye without having a tale to tell. People want a bit of drama, a story to sift through. Or, as EA might well put it, a journey.

The decision to add a story mode to a sports sim is not without precedent. Last year's *NBA 2K16* employed the talents of film director Spike Lee to do something very similar, albeit in a notably hammy,

cheesy way. Script-wise, *FIFA 17*'s *The Journey* is a little less daring than Lee's ill-advised adventure, with far less 'street' speak in the script, shorter cutscenes, and a lot more action. The aim is, however, largely the same - to give players a much more personal story to invest in than the one they achieve within a standard campaign.

It also means no-one can accuse *FIFA 17* of simply being a rehash of last year's effort. However you perceive the action on the pitch, the inclusion of *The Journey* gives *FIFA* an entirely new feel. It's almost as if EA has suddenly realised that what it's putting together year after year is (pinch yourself) a videogame, rather than a mere simulation. Who knew?

Don't stop believing

On that score, *The Journey* comes littered with the kind of moments you'd more typically associate with an RPG, or big budget action-adventure series.

There are highs, there are lows, and there's even a bit of (pinch yourself again) decent acting peppered throughout. For *FIFA* aficionados, the whole thing is going to feel very, very new.

Thanks to the blitz of publicity we've been subjected to in the run up to *FIFA 17*, few will be unaware that *The Journey*'s lead - Alex Hunter - is a young lad looking for success at a Premier League club. After an opening cutscene depicting a five-a-side match in the local park as a kid (with disapproving dad, himself a former player, watching on), play catches up with Alex as he takes part in national trials, looking to catch the eye of an agent and, hopefully, a big team.

This introduces the kind of training sessions that make up half of *The Journey*'s play time, and will be familiar to anyone who takes on the now regular minigames that fill *FIFA*'s pre-match loading sequences. Each session sees you undertake a number of training tests that rate your passing, shooting, defending, and various other abilities, all before the next chunk of play switches to the matches themselves.

Like *FIFA*'s *Be A Pro* mode, here you can choose either to play as the entire team, or just Alex alone. The advantage



TALKING THE GOOD TALK

How conversations impact your journey.

Perhaps the biggest departure from the standard *FIFA* model is the introduction of dialogue choices that directly impact your playing style in *The Journey*. At various points you'll be given three possible responses in a conversation - one slightly hot headed, one rather cool, and one balanced. Whatever you say won't actually alter the plot, but it will affect how you play on the pitch, and how your manager perceives your manner. Being ballsy might win you fans on social networks, but it may also mean it takes a little longer to win the gaffer's trust and respect.

"EVEN PUTTING THE JOURNEY ASIDE, FIFA 17 ULTIMATELY FEELS LIKE A YEAR OF MAJOR CHANGE"



Corners now feature a more accurate aiming system, though the controls are arguably a little too fiddly.



This is Old Trafford. It's hard to tell because decent football is being played on it, which is most unusual.

of the former is you won't be tempted to spend 90 virtual minutes chasing the ball in a desperate effort to stay in the action and be consequently downgraded for playing out of position. But, on the flipside of that, controlling the whole team means it won't necessarily be Alex who can take the glory and adulation of scoring the winning goal. If you've got the discipline, there are rewards to going for the one-man team approach.

Star quality

To begin with, making the starting line-up is just wishful thinking, a pipe dream, and you'll need to contend with brief, off-the-bench substitute appearances in order to make your mark. Even here, however, FIFA 17 gives you set objectives to aim for, and these are key to unlocking your place on the team sheet starting eleven. High match ratings, passing targets, and the aim of either drawing or winning a match regularly feature, even if your manager only shoves you on for the last few desperate minutes of a game you're already losing by a deficit of two or three goals.

It's tough, and it often feels unfair, but by hook or by crook, The Journey does a fine job of replicating the frustration an

up-and-coming player on the fringes of a Premier League team must feel week in and week out, waiting for their big chance to make an impact and get themselves noticed.

It's also something of a trick - The Journey has a specifically scripted story to tell, which means that even if you score a Goal of the Month screamer in every match you play, you're still going to encounter the scores of setbacks the game has indelibly written into its plot. Play through The Journey more than once, and these illusions become all the more visible.

Despite this, there's no escaping the fact that, when those first few goals fly into the onion bag during Alex's initial fleeting appearances, FIFA 17 feels pretty special. It's by no means perfect, and some of the cockernee cor blimey guv'nor cutscenes do feel like they'd have been better placed in The Getaway, but EA has pushed FIFA into fresh territory here, and it would be churlish to suggest it's been anything other than a success.

Even putting The Journey aside, FIFA 17 ultimately feels like a year of major change. Corners, free kicks, and penalties have all been fiddled with, each one now employing both of your pad's twin sticks



OFFICIAL SEAL OF APPROVAL

There's no Nou Camp this time, but FIFA 17 is still a license master

With PES 2017 having signed a lucrative deal with arguably the best football club in the world, FC Barcelona, much attention has been focused on FIFA 17 to see if missing out on its world famous ground, the Nou Camp, would have a major impact and leave a conspicuous stadium-shaped hole.

The reality is, you barely notice its absence. While Pro Evolution Soccer also boasts the official UEFA Champions League and Europa League licenses, FIFA 17 does a more than adequate job of replicating them with unofficial - but largely identical - competitions. It also still sports the support of all the world's major domestic leagues and cup competitions, as well as all of the biggest clubs and national squads across the globe.

The only team of note that's decided to skip FIFA 17 altogether is Iceland - the Nordic country with a smaller population than Bristol which famously dumped England out of this summer's European Championships. Iceland's football association, the KSI, said EA's offer of \$15,000 to include the team came in "below their expectations", although it's worth pointing out Iceland has never officially featured in any previous FIFA outing. "The performance at the Euros show that we are quite a good team and many would like to play with our team," KSI president Geir Thorsteinsson told the BBC. "It's sad for the players - but the criticism should be towards EA Sports."

in order to individually control the direction of the player and the flight of the ball respectively.

The AI of defenders also feels like it's been ramped up. Anyone who liked cutting in from the wings and curling the ball into the net from the corner of the penalty area in FIFA 16 will now find the opposition far less susceptible to a swift change in direction. Almost every element on the pitch feels a touch more difficult than last year, and that can only be intentional.

Nevertheless, FIFA 17 offers a more grounded take on the art of football than PES 2017, which sports a far more floaty and arcade-like feel - as is the franchise's signature. FIFA 17 is comparatively gritty and arguably a little less slick, but it still remains ahead of Konami's best when placed side by side.

Indeed, an inescapable sense of history repeating itself would make up the bulk of chapters in FIFA 17's own journey. As much as the game itself may change, so its battle with Pro Evolution Soccer remains remarkably the same. With Alex Hunter on board and a refined take on the action on the pitch in check, FIFA does, for this season at least, retain its title as the king of football. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Seeing stars like Harry Kane in The Journey is a thrill.
- ✓ The action on the pitch has been made tighter and more tense.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Women's football deserves a greater role.
- ✗ Free kicks and penalties should have been left alone.

Better than...



Pro Evolution Soccer 2017

PES will always have its loyal fans, but played one after the other, FIFA 17's grander ambition wins out.

Worse than...



Paul Pogba's hair

We have to wait all year for a new FIFA, whereas the Manchester United man has a fresh stylised head-covering for us to enjoy every other weekend.

i NEED TO KNOW



A number of real stars have small acting roles in The Journey, including cover star Marco Reus, James Rodriguez, Harry Kane, Marcos Rashford, Deli Alli and Eden Hazard.

GM JUDGEMENT

90%



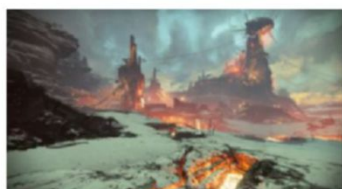
The inclusion of a story mode represents a move into fresh ground for the FIFA series.
Keith Andrew

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



There are certain areas in the game that allow you to grab flaming axes for huge, arcing melee swings.



Format PS4 (reviewed), XO Publisher Activision Developer Bungie ETA Out now Players MMO

DESTINY: RISE OF IRON

Variety is the spice of life

Is it as big as The Taken King, Bungie's last sizeable Destiny content drop? No. No it isn't. But while you'll likely pick clean every last bit of new stuff on offer here in the first week of play (apart from the raid, one of the toughest to crack yet), Rise Of Iron serves as the perfect excuse for lapsed players to leap back in. Because Destiny is still a corking shooter.

The new story campaign, at just over 90 minutes of playtime, is sadly the most disappointing element of the package. If it had been full of thrilling story beats, memorable encounters, and riotous level design, the piddly length wouldn't be too noticeable. There's a well-crafted final level to soak up, but beyond that very little sticks in the mind. This is partly due to the introduction of Destiny's blandest enemies thus far - Splicers.

An ancient technological plague, SIVA, has been unleashed and infected the

Fallen, Destiny's go-to alien grunts, giving them new powers and a new look. Only, they aren't that different, especially when you look at how the Taken, the last wave of new enemies we saw introduced, utterly transformed the way you'd approach encounters. For the most part, one neat anti-head-shot plasma bomb counter-ability aside, you'll quickly feel like you're shooting the same old Fallen. Only with peg legs. Arrr. The new Patrol map, The Plaguelands, is a reshuffle of Cosmodrome, and the new social area, Felwinter Peak, ends up being another reason to sit through a few more loading screens with each evening session.

There is one new Strike to play through, which has a great double boss encounter which should see fireteams neatly work together to overcome. A giant, invulnerable, club-fisted ogre, and a slight, fast-moving Fallen priest, they immediately join the pantheon of great Destiny boss fights. It's a shame, then, that the rest of the Strike is so boring, a trapeze through vertical tunnels at one point evoking memories of those

similarly dull levels from Half-Life which we'd buried years ago lest they tarnish our glowy nostalgia.

Machine games

The raid, Wrath Of The Machine, on the other hand, is one of the finest of the lot thus far. Given free reign on current-gen machines (PS3 and 360 are no longer supported going forwards) means Bungie is able to do some incredible things, both in terms of visual design and gameplay. The standout feature is a gigantic moving siege wall which your team rides on as it moves through the map. Not since we rode atop a Scarab through Metropolis in Halo 2 has Bungie had our jaw this agape.

But for all its quality, we're still hugely disappointed that nothing has been done to address the matchmaking problem when it comes to raiding. It's where the best bits of Destiny are tucked away, and only a comparatively small number of people are able to enjoy it due to the lack of any party-forming function in-game. It needs sorting.

There is a sense Rise Of Iron is Bungie spinning its wheels as it works on Destiny 2 behind closed doors. Even though that might be the case, this is basically a little bit more of the finest shooter on current-gen machines. And that's a hard thing to feel too wrathful about. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The new raid is up there with Vault Of Glass. Utterly fantastic.
- ✓ This is still, at its core, the finest shooter on PS4 and XO.

GM HATES...

- ✗ There's not a lot of it and you'll quickly be back to the loot grind.
- ✗ It's ridiculous that you still can't matchmake for raids.

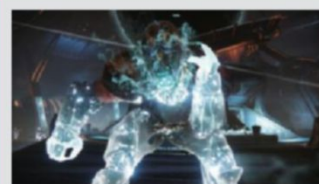
Better than...



Destiny

The original version doesn't really exist anymore, but Rise Of Iron, for all its slightness, still represents a Bungie which makes great Destiny content.

Worse than...



Destiny: The Taken King

The Splicers are just so much less interesting to play against compared to the Taken. We seriously doubt we'll remember them for too long.

ONLINE

A new match type in PvP appears! Supremacy requires you to grab Crests from fallen foes for extra points. Private PvP is here as well, so you can custom create matches for you and your besties.

GM JUDGEMENT

74%



There's not a lot here, but it's still worth gearing up your Guardians for.
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman

"THERE IS A SENSE RISE OF IRON IS BUNGIE SPINNING ITS WHEELS AS IT WORKS ON DESTINY 2"



Format PS4, XO (reviewed), PC, PS3, 360 Publisher 2K Sports Developer Yukes ETA Out now Players 1-6

WWE 2K17

Caught between a Rock and a hard place

We know pro wrestling is scripted because we've never seen someone pull off a shooting star press in a pub fight. And putting on a show here is more important than simply beating up your opponent. Varying moves, countering with well-timed prods, and playing to the gallery earns you a better rating, which increases your push in story mode.

WWE 2K17 is the game equivalent of a smart mark - at one point we spear The Rock, who reverses it into a DDT on a chair, and this back-and-forth drama earns a score bonus. Ring conduct matters too. Interrupting an opponent's entrance or putting the boot in post-bell turns you heel in fans' eyes, while kicking out of pinfalls and being bold with high spots earns you babyface love. Outside of career there's less incentive to wow the crowd besides earning in-game currency (a time-saving option lets you

unlock hidden wrestlers and arenas instantly), so the effect is less a breaking of kayfabe than a light thump.

MyCareer, all about creating and leading a superstar to glory, is flawed elsewhere. Promo work, for instance, centres on sussing the crowd's vibes and choosing between dialogue options for maximum pop, but there's no rhyme or reason to it. What's the difference between 'The time for change is now', 'I'm leading the charge' and 'Our paths will cross'? Intro lines give little indication of what you're going to say, and the bewildering lack of voice acting instantly snaps you out of the scene (mouths flap without producing any sound).

Wrestle in peace

The idea of developing your wrestler's brand, raising attributes, and either pleasing or annoying The Authority by doing their bidding or defying them is a good one, but poor pacing stifles. We graduate from the Performance Centre in about 20 minutes and find ourselves immediately thrust into a main event on

Smackdown against Seth Rollins. Where to go from here?

At least you can't say WWE 2K17 is lacking entertainment. Matches include Extreme Rules, Hell In A Cell, TLC, Falls Count Anywhere, Elimination Chamber, Royal Rumble, and the new Backstage Brawl, which ends when one person gets their head smashed through a TV or tumbles through Triple H's oak office table as he stands there tutting.

Unfortunately, the more complex the rules, the more awkward the action. Trying to grab an object at the wrong angle causes your character to physically stutter, and sluggishness makes setting up ladders and climbing turnbuckles too time-consuming. Also, the game gets confused when you press two buttons at once - you shouldn't have to release the movement stick before attacking.

Favour's won back by an extensive customisation suite letting you create and share superstars, belts, movesets, signature videos, entrances, and arenas. Whether it's constructing the original Smackdown show complete with grainy VHS filter, downloading an unofficial CM Punk, or pitting '90s Kane against Stone Cold, there's something for anyone who's watched WWE, WCW, or ECW wrestling in the last 20 years. Boo for ring rust and a fatally flawed MyCareer. Cheer for everything else. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Playing up to the fans adds a new dimension to fights.
- ✓ Creating arenas, belts, movesets, entrance videos is a joy.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Commentators aside, there's no voice acting in career mode.
- ✗ Unresponsive controls can lead to awkward-looking fighting.

Our custom weirdos



Wonder Boy

Standing 7ft 4in, this ginger gorilla exudes charisma and sweat in equal measure. He fights in socks and holds his underpants up with a belt.



Dangerous Debra Dingle

Set to conquer the women's division with her asymmetrical and sunburned face. She's got the most electrifying jowls in sports entertainment.



Big Baby

Take your created monster online. There's nothing more unsettling than heading into a matchup and meeting this wailing onesie-wearer.

GM JUDGEMENT

70%



The Diamond Dallas Page of WWE games - a rich legacy and entertaining, but too flawed for stardom.
Ben Griffin

"TAKE A TUMBLE THROUGH TRIPLE H'S OAK OFFICE TABLE AS HE STANDS THERE TUTTING"

You can play up to six-person online matches. But everyone is really good... Just hit them with a bat and get disqualified.

You can play as the bearded and battle-scarred Marcus Fenix in multiplayer, but not the campaign.



RAINBOW COALITION

Taking the grey out of Gears

One welcome change made by the new series custodians is the expansion of the colour palette, which has traditionally wallowed at the grey end of the spectrum.



Format XO (reviewed), PC Publisher Microsoft Studios Developer The Coalition ETA Out now Players 1-10

GEARS OF WAR 4

The series returns, like a Fenix from the ashes



anding control of an established franchise to a new developer is a risky business. After all, it was Epic Games that

created Marcus Fenix and the Locust Horde, partly as a playable advert for its Unreal Engine. Those characters were forged in the crucible of cutting-edge R&D and fleshed out by a developer at the top of its game. Could another studio hope to capture the same blend of snappy shooting, muscular machismo, and crisp cover-handling that defined the series?

The Coalition's response is an enthusiastic 'yes', and even though Gears Of War 4 centres around an entirely new

cast of characters, it feels immediately and gratifyingly familiar. The Locust Horde is gone - purged at the end of Gears Of War 3 - but Sera has not become a peaceful planet in the 25 years since Epic's trilogy concluded. The opening act sees you at odds with the same Coalition Of Ordered Governments that Fenix and Santiago once served. The COG has gone all dystopian, enforcing a mandatory reproduction policy and employing vast automated armies to defend its pristine cities. Those who hope to exist outside of its autocratic reach are forced to scavenge a living.

That's precisely where JD Fenix comes in, who deserts the COG along with childhood friend Del. The pair has lent its expertise to a community called, fittingly enough, the Outsiders, and the opening

act sees this ragtag team raiding a deserted COG settlement. The relationship between Fenix junior and senior might be best described as frosty, but it's clear JD has inherited his father's panache for hunkering behind waist-high walls, and you still slide into cover with that satisfying thump that no other game really delivers.

Grizzled grump

The COG settlement itself, meanwhile, is notably brighter, cleaner, and more colourful than the environments visited in any of the previous outings, with nary a burnt-out car or ruined household in sight. But once the automated DeeBee soldiers arrive for a bust-up, it's clear that Gears 4 is no radical reinvention - every class of mechanised soldier has an obvious counterpart in the Locust ranks. The standard Shepherds are essentially Locust Drones, the robo-heavies are basically Boomers, and there are even robotic versions of the explosive Tickers that rush towards you in scurrying kamikaze waves.



ACE IN THE HOLE

Collecting cards and buying boosters

Cards are everywhere these days, and Gears 4 is no exception, offering booster packs for in-game currency or cold, hard cash. Fortunately, the game's competitive Versus mode features nothing more than cosmetic customisation cards. Horde 3.0, however, lets each player equip a number of class-specific buff cards at the start of each game. An Engineer that's especially keen on sentry turrets might plump for a card that reduces their cost or increases their durability. Unwrap a duplicate, and you can either scrap it for currency or level-up the card's effect. In its current form, the system strikes an excellent balance between offering long-term meaning for your Horde binges and allaying pay-to-win worries.

"THIS IS A SUPREMELY COMPETENT GAME, BUT NOT ALWAYS A CONFIDENT ONE"



But it's only once you're out of the city that Gears Of War 4 kicks off in earnest. A new and very slimy threat emerges, and quickly turns out to be even more similar to the Locust than the automated adversaries introduced in the first act. In dire need of assistance and with nowhere else to run, you make a mad dash to JD's family estate in search of the muscle-bound curmudgeon that is Marcus Fenix. And if you thought the man-mountain was a bit of a caricature in the first Gears trilogy, just wait until you witness this grizzled warrior mourning his tomato plants in the face of an all-out assault on his home.

And it's at this point Gears Of War 4 transitions from visually impressive to simply spectacular. The third act in particular features some of the most breathtaking environmental art in the medium, beautifully framed nocturnal vistas that could sit comfortably alongside the work of Naughty Dog and CD Projekt as the best the industry has to offer. And while it shouldn't be especially noteworthy that a triple-A videogame is technically solid, the fact is we live in an era of botched launches and Assassin's Creed Unitys. But during our time with Gears of War 4 we didn't suffer a single bug, crash, or glitch worth mentioning.

This is a supremely competent game, then, but not always a confident one. There's a level of respect for the original

trilogy on show in the campaign mode that borders on deference – a sense that the new developer's job is to remain slavishly faithful to Epic's vision. The spectre of the Locust War looms over this game, both in the sense of the narrative shadow it casts and the developer's reluctance to stray too far from established enemy types. For all its successes in terms of pacing, artistry, and game feel, the Gears Of War 4 campaign all too often feels a little bit safe.

Slay together

The Gears multiplayer package has always been a deeply distinctive one, and The Coalition's offering respects that legacy too. Versus mode sees the return of the beloved Warzone game type, for instance, which pits two teams of five against one another with no respawning allowed whatsoever. Conditions here are perfect for tense finales and nail-biting reversals, a bit like Counter-Strike with chainsaws. Team Deathmatch, meanwhile, is just a smidge more welcoming, allowing each team a limited number of resurrections before their stock is depleted. The results can be thrilling, intense, or sometimes just a deeply silly descent into endless dodge-rolling and shotgun duels.

Horde mode, meanwhile, has undergone an impressive revamp, introducing classes, skills, and

tower-defence elements to the hoary Xbox Live favourite. Central to all this is the Fabricator, a futuristic 3D printer that's introduced in the campaign mode and allows you to build defences, sentries, and weapons by spending currency collected from downed foes. The system compels you to venture out from safe spaces in search of those precious points, while the introduction of classes rewards differing play styles with handy buffs or specialised weaponry. The Engineer, for instance, wields a repair tool for your fortifications, while daredevil Scouts receive double currency from enemy corpses, making them the ideal battlefield scavengers.

Horde, then, is the one place where The Coalition has well and truly stamped its own mark upon the series, and this terrific transformation is clear evidence that this studio is perfectly capable of forging a path into the future for this tent-pole franchise. To some extent, it's disappointing that the developer didn't do more of this in the campaign, opting instead to carefully recreate the highpoints of the series' past.

Gears Of War 4 is meticulously crafted, but what it lacks, unfortunately, is that spark of inspiration. Marcus Fenix may have passed the torch on to JD in this game, but the question is whether the son will ever be able to fully escape the anxiety of influence. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Gears' sense of heft has been perfectly preserved.
- ✓ It's visually spectacular, and more colourful than ever.
- ✓ Horde 3.0 is a solid revamp, with something for everyone.

GM HATES...

- ✗ It feels tied to the past, and never really breaks new ground.

Better than...



Gears Of War

Gears 4 offers a generous package of refined gunplay, visual spectacle, and online excitement that you couldn't cram on to a puny 360 disc.

Worse than...



Gears Of War

But while Gears 4 is carefully crafted, the original was restlessly innovative, making a lasting impression on players and the industry.

i NEED TO KNOW



Although all of Gears Of War 4's map DLC will be free, they'll actually take the place of existing maps on a rotational basis. If you want access to all the maps at once, you'll have to pay for the privilege.

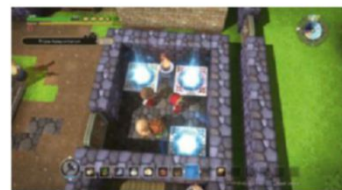
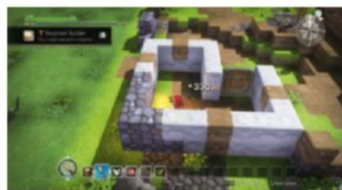
GM JUDGEMENT

84%



The series is certainly in safe hands, but we wish new developer The Coalition was a little bolder.
James Nouch

Don't be fooled by their cutesy looks - villagers will help defend towns to the death. Brave little loves.



Format PS4 (reviewed), PS Vita Publisher Square Enix Developer Square Enix ETA Out now Players 1

DRAGON QUEST BUILDERS

Saving the world one block at a time



Cubes, crafting, and building... this is just a Japanese Minecraft clone, isn't it? Nope. It might take a lot of inspiration from its Swedish cousin, but *Dragon Quest Builders* is a very different beast - it's a story-driven RPG first and foremost, complete with an epic tale of good vs evil. You just need to build stuff to progress it.

Ok, it's not *completely* different - the basic rhythm is definitely familiar. You venture out to go hunting/logging/mining for materials, then return to camp to craft your haul into various buildings and objects. And while it has *Dragon Quest* in its title, this is definitely not the kind of sweeping, dungeon-grinding adventure the series is known and loved for. This is more like the unexpected, smiling, blocky baby of the two games.

Set in Alefgard - a land that has been overtaken by monsters to the point where all humans are in hiding and the power to create things has been lost - you suddenly awaken as the legendary 'Builder'. It's up to you to raise new towns where previous civilisations once stood, returning them to their former glory and banishing darkness from the land. Set over several chapters, you'll start with a small camp in a different world each time, and take on quests to progress until you have a flourishing city.

Hip to be square

Building works just as you'd expect - place blocks down in grid-like areas until you make something pretty. If you're feeling creative there are a lot of different textures to play around with, from stone walls to ornate carpets, so there's plenty of scope for some amazing builds. You can also make lots of non-blocky things, like round pots, benches, and dressing

tables, and really let your inner interior designer run free. But to clear the story, there are certain rules you need to abide by as you go.

To complete quests and level up your town you'll need to make rooms with certain items in. For a bedroom, you'll need to have a two-high wall all the way around, a door, a bed, and a light source. To make a kitchen you'll need a door, a chest, and a cookfire. And so on. If you don't make proper rooms, you won't fulfil your objectives - but it's always incredibly clear what's required. In some cases you're even given blueprints that show you exactly where you need to place certain blocks.

There's also a tactical layer to building, as having certain types of rooms in your town will give you buffs. For instance, making a café will stop your hunger meter dropping while you're in town. This is something that comes in particularly handy during fighting phases.



Every now and then a posse of no-good monsters will roll up and try to ransack your cherished village and do as much damage as they can. Usually it's just a few piddly skeletons, which are no bother to fend off, but every now and then you'll get a quest that turns everything into a tower defence game. Waves of bigger foes, eventually culminating in the appearance of a boss, come at your town and you, along with your fellow townsfolk, must fight them off and prevent them from reducing the place to a pile of rubble and dust.

Having the right rooms in your town can give plucky residents higher health or better armour, so they're less prone to dying. You can even build anti-monster spike traps to further fortify your lovingly-crafted estate. In fact, one simple thing you can do to protect your settlement is build a dirt wall all the way around it, making things much harder for monsters with pillaging on their minds to get in.

The combat itself is basic. You hit things with one button until they fall over. It still manages to be fiddly, though. Your weapon range is limited, so you have to get really close to enemies, which often results in getting too close and taking damage. You eventually unlock a spin attack and learn bomb crafting, which makes things better, but it's definitely the game's weak point.

Block heads

The story itself is great fun. It's a simple tale of reclaiming the world from the darkness and desolation spread over the land by the evil Dragonlord, which is achieved by rebuilding everything. It's all charmingly done. Everyone you meet is

ROOMS WITH A VIEW

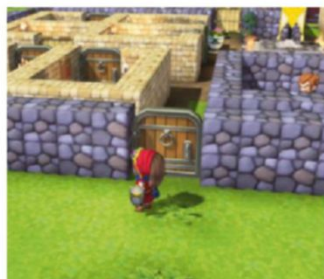
The best buildings to, er, y'know... build

Different building types can give different buffs, and discovering new types can also boost your town score.

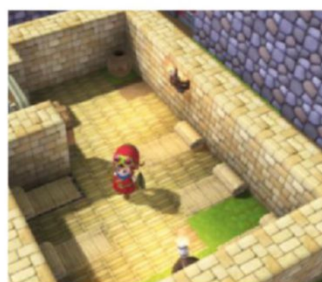
Here are a few useful construction tips that will help your town flourish in the game's early stages and keep it safer from marauding monsters.



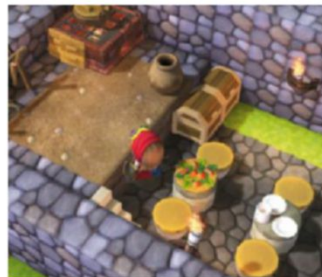
2 For a huge points boost, add a bed (stolen from the abandoned castle), a chair, and some 'fancy' lighting.



4 Building a wall around your city might not give you any points, but it makes it far, far easier to defend.



1 Adding six beds to a room makes it an inn, which gives villagers an HP boost - handy when they help you fight.



3 Cafés can stop your hunger meter dropping. You'll find a blueprint for one in Hammerhood Heights.



5 The sickroom lets you heal villagers with items so they can eventually contribute to your town.

"THE SLIGHTLY SILLY TONE THROUGHOUT IS THE PERFECT FIT FOR SUCH A LIGHT STORY"

delightfully weird in their own unique way. "By my elegant elbows!" the bearded oddball Rollo booms when you give him something, while another villager trash talks him elsewhere. Even the mystical narrator isn't perfect, getting irritated with you, the silent protagonist, when you don't do things to her schedule. There were moments when we genuinely laughed out loud at what certain characters were saying. The slightly silly tone throughout is the perfect fit for such a light story - all the better to let the core building aspect be the focus in each of the game's chapters and set ups.

Annoyingly there isn't an autosave, so prepare for a few anguished tears if you've forgotten to save at your flag and have lost a few hours of building time. Thankfully you don't lose any progress if you die in a fight, and your items get left behind where you fell.

On the subject of saves, each of the game's chapters uses a completely



QUEST IN SHOW

Lending a helping hand

It's not just the adorable diddy folk who live in the towns who need helping. You'll find hidden monsters and people dotted around the world who are also in need of your abilities. However, these aren't marked on the map and aren't recorded, so you'll need to hunt them out, remember what they want and where they are. The rewards are worth it, though, be it useful/valuable items or completely new blueprints.

different file. It might not seem like much, but it means that if you want to go back and see something you missed or to finish off the extra challenges, you won't have to start the whole game over again.

However, Dragon Quest Builders isn't as open as Minecraft - there's no random world generation to constantly give you new things to see and do. The world is very much set as it is. But that's ok. It doesn't need to be huge. There's easily enough packed into DQB that you never find yourself bored, and there's still plenty of room to let any big creative builds breathe. And what DQB lacks in comparative openness, it makes up for with all those bright colours and round surfaces, which make for a refreshing change from the cubed rigidity of Minecraft. We hope Mojang sees fit to take a few notes. ■



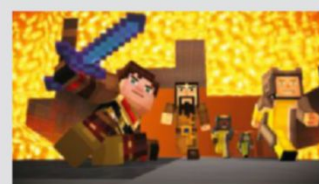
GM LOVES...

- ✓ Everything you build looks beautiful - it's not just blocky.
- ✓ The writing for the characters is charming and personable.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Close quarters fighting with enemies is fiddly.
- ✗ The world is limited and always structured the same.

Better than...



Minecraft: Story Mode

DQB is what a scripted adventure set in Mojang's block-rocking world should have been - a simple tale solved with different building types.

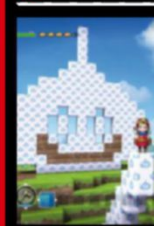
Worse than...



Minecraft

Nothing can compete with the limitless potential of an open, randomised world. But DQB definitely makes for a great change of scenery.

NEED TO KNOW



There is a free build mode that lets you show off your constructions to others, but you unlock various block types for it by completing challenges in the story first.

GM JUDGEMENT

84%



Charming, funny, and full of creative scope. A nice break from Minecraft, even if it is limited in comparison.
Daniella Lucas



Format PC Publisher Devolver Digital Developer Flying Wild Hog ETA Out now Players 1-4

SHADOW WARRIOR 2

Everybody have fun tonight, everybody Lo Wang tonight

The original *Shadow Warrior* was released by 3D Realms in 1997, a year after *Duke Nukem 3D*. Like *Duke*, it introduced a wise-cracking protagonist, a heap of humour, and plenty of good 'ol fashioned gore. Thanks to clever writing and memorable hero Lo Wang, it became a cult hit, and was popular enough to spawn a reboot three years ago from *Hard Reset* developer Flying Wild Hog. The reboot had its fans, but its share of rough edges too, and the studio has gone back to the drawing board for this sequel, serving up an open-world gorefest spanning three realms for maximum carnage.

Shadow Warrior 2 opens with Lo Wang singing along to '80s powerhouse Stan Bush. It's 'The Touch', of course, because

why wouldn't it be? From the first few moments of the game it's clear how things are going to play out. It's extremely silly, rife with exactly the kinds of jokes you'd expect from a character named Lo Wang.

Set five years after the events that unfolded in the 2013 reboot, *Shadow Warrior 2* finds our hero taking refuge in his newly-minted safe haven, the very maturely named Wang Cave, as the shadow realm (home of various demons) and the human realm (home of various humans) have overlapped with one another, setting monsters loose on our world. Some are content to live peacefully among us, but others want only to destroy any living being they come into contact with.

Lo and behold

The stage is set perfectly for the transformation from linear title into a semi open-world endeavour with

procedurally generated elements. These mean that you'll be able to replay certain missions and discover enemy placements, boss locations, and loot pick-ups have all changed. Sometimes you may find yourself in the heat of battle at night, when it's more difficult to plan routes away from enemies or even see them in the first place. Or the weather may turn against you, pouring rain, hindering visibility. It's true that no two engagements will be the same, and that's part of what makes *Shadow Warrior 2* so much fun to come back to.

Because of this, you won't always be able to launch a meticulously planned offensive when you die and are forced to come back. So, if and when you decide to return to a certain area and purge the demons, you'll have to keep your wits about you, as there's no telling where the fleshy fiends may spring from next. It's a fantastic twist on the formula, adding elements of forced improvisation to the otherwise distinctly old school framework of the game.

This also means areas may generate difficult segments that you just aren't ready for, which can (and usually will) result in a quick trip to the game over screen – a frustrating setback. But when



WANT SOME MORE WANG?

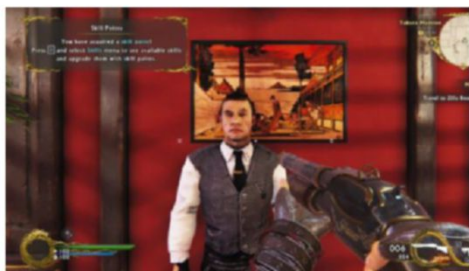
The expanded universe of *Shadow Warrior* awaits

If you want to spend more time in the world of *Shadow Warrior*, you might want to consider picking up the original companion novels that hit store shelves back in 1997. For *Dead Eyes Only* and *You Only Die Twice* (only the most subtle references for this series) were released at the height of *Shadow Warrior*'s popularity, and both pieces of paperback fiction are a kitschy mix of '90s videogame iniquities and pulp novel hilarity. Getting hold of them may be tricky, however – they're practically collector's items these days...

“NO TWO ENGAGEMENTS WILL BE THE SAME, AND THAT’S WHAT MAKES IT SO MUCH FUN TO COME BACK TO”



Everywhere Wang goes he leaves a trail of dead bodies in his wake, thanks to a selection of satisfying weapons.



You'll discover plenty of impressive and ornate locales as you explore Wang's world.



THROWBACKS AND EASTER EGGS

Shadow Warrior 2 shows some love for fans and newcomers alike

Like the old school shooters it apes, Shadow Warrior 2 is packed with secrets in the form of callbacks to both the original game and the 2013 reboot, as well as cool references to other games in publisher Devolver Digital's catalogue. We'll leave the bulk of what can be found unspoiled, so you can discover the surprises for yourself, but we couldn't resist taking a shot of these awesome arcade machines. Each displays a different game – Hard Reset, Hotline Miami, and Serious Sam. When you get up close and investigate the retro-style cabinets, you get short clips showing what each game is all about. Unfortunately (but rather understandably), you can't play the games within the confines of this one, but seeing them as diminutive versions of their much larger selves is pleasing none the less. Just promise us you won't slice them up with your sword. That'd just be disrespectful.



SHADOW WARRIOR 2

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Taking on hordes of demons is seriously satisfying.
- ✓ Missions can be approached in a variety of – very violent – ways.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Difficulty has a tendency to spike randomly from time to time.
- ✗ The spotty narrative, while campy, could use some work.

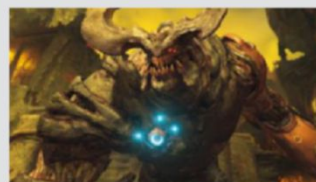
Better than...



Duke Nukem Forever

Once thought to be vaporware, Duke's latest outing finally managed to hit store shelves in 2011. We rather wish it hadn't bothered.

Worse than...



Doom

Bethesda's slick reboot of the seminal shooter is a raucous and challenging demon blaster with a focus and polish that Shadow Warrior 2 can't match.

NEED TO KNOW



Shadow Warrior 2 is out now on PC, but console players will have to wait a little longer – the game is coming to PlayStation 4 and Xbox One, but the release date is yet to be confirmed.

GM JUDGEMENT

85%

This welcome latest return to the Wang Cave offers a delicious dose of explosive, old school action.
Brittany Vincent

the action hits its sweet spot, and you're mowing down and slicing through foes like the world's hottest knife through a village of butter men, Shadow Warrior 2 is a brilliantly slick, violent spectacle, one that classic shooter fans, or indeed anyone who can appreciate the finer subtleties of choosing the right gun for making a very messy, melon-shaped hole in a demon's chest, will have a blast with.

There are 70 such weapons to choose from, an impressive expansion over the first game's relatively modest selection. From brutal melee weapons such as hand claws, short swords, and katanas, to powerful ranged options including shotguns, pistols, and rocket launchers, there's something for everyone, no matter your preferred method of murder. Such a varied arsenal makes for plenty of tactical options in a scrap, and keeps the frantic action feeling fresh.

Total slayage

Further loadout-tinkering comes in the form of weapon upgrades. Each tool of death has three slots for augments, ready to be filled with items found out in the world. Some will grant elemental affinities or increased damage – buffs you'll certainly find yourself in need of

when there are so many denizens of the shadow realm that need to be slain. And when even all that tricked-out gear isn't enough, you can fall back on Wang's suite of arcane powers, blasting foes with bolts of chi, or summoning demonic spikes to burst out of the ground for quick crowd control.

Despite his pack bulging with so many tools, he's a more nimble hero than ever before, blessed with fast and fluid movement and parkour abilities, so you can dash, double-jump, and otherwise zip from point A to point B with the greatest of ease, like a true ninja. If you didn't know any better, you'd swear this was an Assassin's Creed outing, as Wang can clamber around on elements of the environment, catch ledges to pull himself upward, and generally manoeuvre with much more freedom than we saw in the previous game.

It's a blast to roll through Wang's world on your lonesome, but you don't have to hold off the fetid legions of spawn beasts single-handedly. Shadow Warrior 2 features four-player online co-op, allowing you to bring a team of

buddies into the mix to help you out. The game is hosted by one player, but everyone does get to play as Lo Wang, though you all appear to each other as generic ninja clones. The group doesn't have to stick close together, either – you're free to range apart across the game's sprawling world.

It's great to see developer Flying Wild Hog given the chance to take another stab at this classic franchise – the result is a much larger, more polished, and more enjoyable shooter than its first effort. If the unrestrained slaughter of seemingly endless demonic hordes and a generous splattering of blood and guts is your idea of a good time, you owe it to yourself to get a piece of this Wang. Ahem. ■



GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PC, PS3, 360 Publisher 2K Sports Developer Visual Concepts ETA Out now Players 1-10

NBA 2K17

A massive hoops sim with something for everyone

For the better part of a decade, 2K Sports' NBA franchise has been the gold standard of sports videogames. Few competitors come close to matching its consistent quality, depth, intelligent gameplay, and presentation.

While it may not introduce an over-the-top new mode, NBA 2K17 delivers an incredible amount of content and diversity of features, all polished to brilliant shine. Building upon efforts to make its core gameplay even more authentic, creating social experiences that highlight individuality and comradery, yet allowing new (or those who aren't interested in participating in that social world) players to follow their own path via single-player modes, NBA 2K17 can be genuinely enjoyed by anyone. Well, anyone who likes bouncing balls, at least.

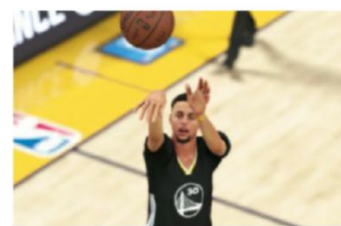
It's no hyperbole to say it's really four complete games in one - each with its own unique characteristics and features, joined by a common thread of a love of the culture of hoops. Traditional 5-on-5 fans can sink their teeth into online or offline leagues via MyGM and MyLeague, experiencing the NBA as it stands today or creating a custom world with varying numbers of existing or fantasy teams. Players looking to experience a story focused on an up-and-coming rookie and his relationships with coaches, real NBA players, and family members get to explore MyCareer. MyPark enables you to customize and level up your individual player and compete with and against friends in an evolving MMO-like world. Meanwhile, people looking to build a fantasy team via Ultimate Team-style card collection, and take it online to climb leaderboards and battle others, have MyTeam. And that's just for starters.

Not only is NBA 2K17 massive in scope, it looks and sounds great

throughout. Seemingly every presentation detail is polished to a high sheen, including top-notch visuals introducing and tracking the action, as well as an astonishing amount of excellent pre-game, play-by-play, and sideline commentary from a large group of real-world NBA analysts. Beautifully-lit arenas pulse with crowd reactions, sneakers squeak as players run around the court, and pumped-in sounds of music snippets permeate the air. The atmosphere for games is simply electric.

All that dunk

One of the reasons NBA basketball is so popular is the individual attributes of its stars, from Steph Curry's gorgeous jump shots, to LeBron James' otherworldly physicality. NBA 2K17 represents each of its subjects admirably, in both appearance and play. As you come to grips with who you're controlling - whether at the helm of a team in a 5-on-5 experience or controlling a single avatar in your Career at the multiplayer Park - those idiosyncrasies shine through. Each player has specific jump shots and free throws, for example, with their own timing to master. On one hand, the simulation and depth of these is incredibly impressive - players truly

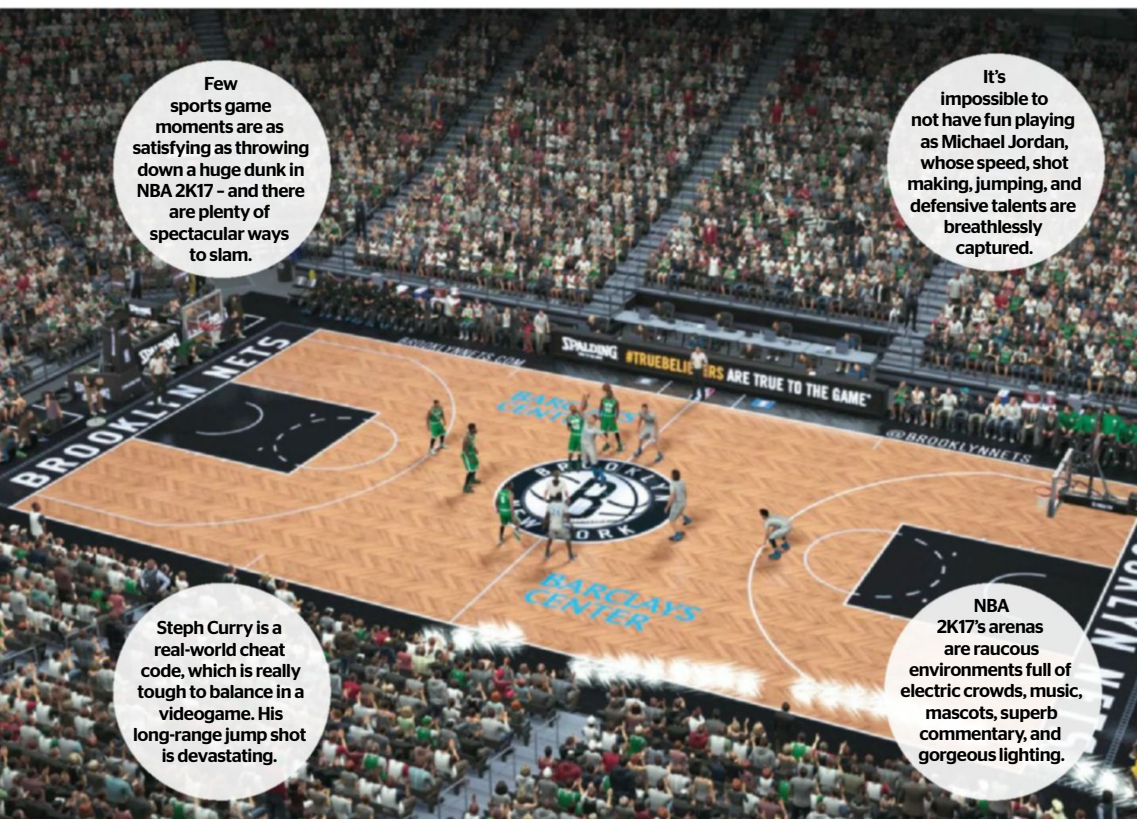


JUMP AND GRIND

The long, long journey to baller stardom

MyCareer is a sports RPG, placing you squarely in the shoes of an up-and-coming player trying to make it in the NBA. You can choose any position and configure your height and weight, which dictates the kind of skills you'll have. From there, you participate in a storyline centred around getting playing time, establishing strong relationships with teammates, and becoming (hopefully) a star. MyCareer demands a lot of time and effort, though - it's reminiscent in many ways of old-school grinding in role-playing games of days gone by. Some will be put off, while others will delight in putting in the work.

"EACH INDIVIDUAL PLAYER HAS DOZENS OF DRIBBLE MOVES, PASS TYPES, AND SHOTS"



Player likenesses are stunningly realistic - detailed faces and on-court mannerisms evoke real-world players old and new.



Not happy with your team's current city? Move to one of dozens of North American locales - but, sadly, none in the UK.

"come alive" because of these details. On the other hand, it can be daunting to learn the impact of these differences, especially when you're in the heat of battle and have to internalize how to time your shot based on who you're using and where they are on the court.

Hoopy loopy

Therein lies NBA 2K17's true dichotomy - the beauty of its sim level of realism also puts significant demands on the player. Unless you're playing on the absolute easiest settings, NBA 2K17 plays true to the sport and offers a seemingly unlimited array of control choices and options that can be utterly incomprehensible to newcomers. There are layers upon layers - each individual player has dozens of dribble moves, pass types, and shots, while teams have dozens of plays they can run in real time. Strategies can be executed based on the situation, from playing lockdown defence on a targeted opponent player late in a tight game, to running and gunning on offense to exploit weaknesses.

Some may lament the difficulty curve of NBA 2K17. That's missing the point, though. The game invites players to learn

at whatever pace they choose, and to whatever level they like. It is entirely plausible that you will spend an hour or two learning basic moves and strategies with a single Google search and a bit of practice, then be off to the races enjoying a season with your favourite team. However, truly learning the details of offensive strategies and play calls, understanding and exploiting individual player strengths, and executing pick and rolls, screens and motion, unlocks an entirely new - and extraordinary - level of play that is based on the true fundamentals of professional basketball. Rarely has the pay-off of time and effort been so high in a sports videogame.

That's not to say NBA 2K17 doesn't have its problems. While the core gameplay is better than last year and feels smoother, and the AI doesn't feel cheap, strange behaviour occurs at times. Defensive coaching assignments seem to be forgotten quickly, reverting to AI-based calls instead of what you tell your team to do. The camera cutaway will sometimes show a part of the court where absolutely nothing is happening. The MyCareer mode also has some issues, particularly in registering attribute

gains - as in, they don't seem to always stick despite putting in the work. With MyCareer asking much from you in time and investment, that's a big faux pas. Much of this is likely to be cleaned up in one or more patches, but in the meantime it's a pain in the neck.

In-game virtual currency that can be purchased with real-world dollars (called VC) is also intertwined in the fabric of the NBA 2K17 experience, as it has been for several years. No mode is spared impact, although it's entirely plausible to enjoy the bulk of the game without feeling the need to spend additional money to move forward. MyTeam is the one area where spending VC is key - while it's possible to use the numerous single-player challenges to build up currency, spending real dollars to get better cards, players, and power-ups called 'consumables' is heavily promoted. Microtransactions are the norm in many console games these days, but NBA 2K17 pushes boundaries of taste.

But it's hard to dwell too much on these niggles when the package is otherwise so polished and generous. This is a triumph of sports game design - basketball has never looked better. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ It plays beautifully and looks and sounds spectacular doing so.
- ✓ The variety of gameplay ensures you'll find something to enjoy.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Buggier than 2K is known for, but there's nothing game-breaking.
- ✗ It always has its hand out for more microtransaction money.

Better than...



NBA 2K16

2K17 improves on its predecessor in all sorts of ways - and, thankfully, it doesn't feature a protagonist called 'Frequency Vibrations'.

Worse than...



MLB 16 The Show

Sony's American baseball game is a showcase of smooth gameplay and nuanced experiences that NBA 2K could learn something from.

i NEED TO KNOW



The ability to play in a persistent online league with friends is a lovely gem of a mode that manages to heighten the experience even more. Rivalries, stats, and championships are on the line.

GM JUDGEMENT

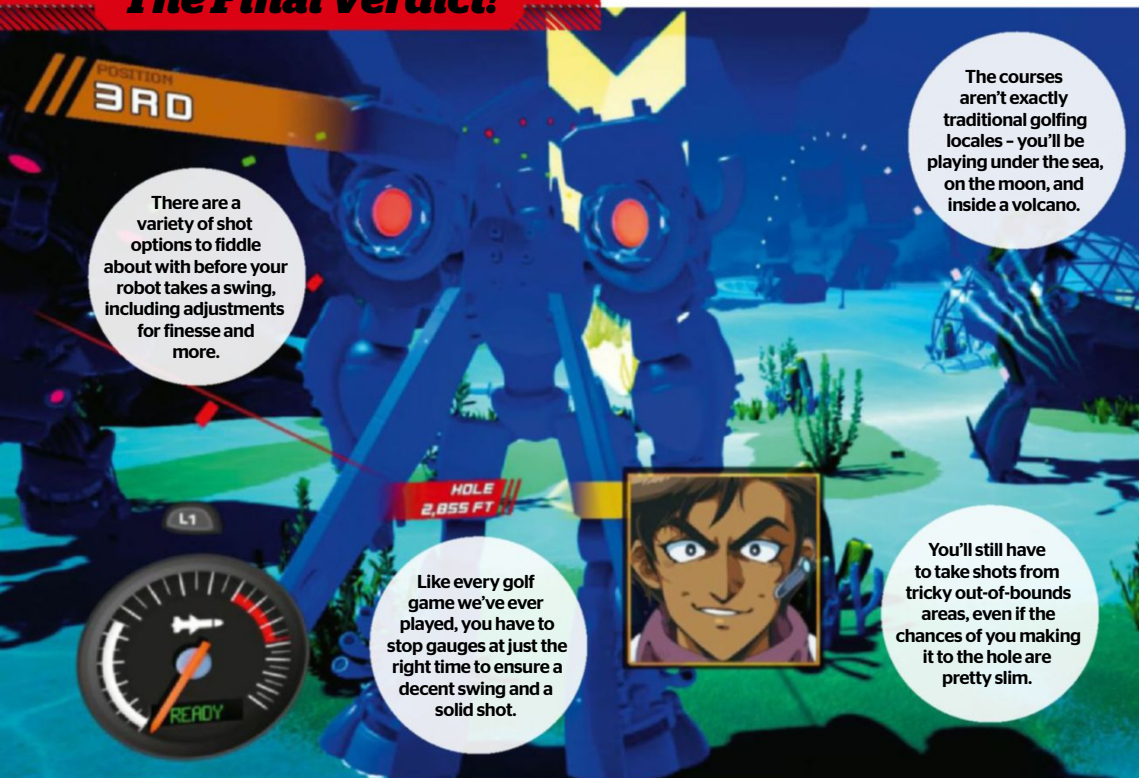
89%



A triumph of style, simulation, and originality that stays true to the culture of basketball.
Richard Grisham

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Format PS4 Publisher No Goblin Developer No Goblin ETA Out now Players 1-4

100FT ROBOT GOLF

You will find your flow when you go robot

You'd be hard pressed to find two things that clash more than golf and giant robots. Golf favours a silent and subdued tone, while enormous robots generally clank around, destroy things and are, for the most part, anything but subtle. So why put these two things together? And for what purpose? No one has the answer to that question except No Goblin, the game's developer.

In 100ft Robot Golf (we just can't stop saying those words - they fit so perfectly, lumpily together!), you assume the role of one of more than ten robot pilots, a weird and wonderful line-up which includes a disembodied head, some corgi dogs, and a used vehicle salesman. Each pilot has a different theme and manner in its interactions with the golf ball. The courses are out of this world as well, straying away from the typical green sod and sand. These golfers are playing in

locales just as extreme as the robots they pilot, and that's a big part of the fun.

Each level brings new complications and nuances in how the ball and robot behaves. In the midst of a large city, you can expect the ball to act normally. A match that takes place under less conventional golfing conditions on, say, the moon or underwater, however, will, as you'd expect, play out very differently.

And unlike regular golf where obstacles are an essential part of course design, here you can simply obliterate structures that block your path - if there's wreckage in your way, just blast it with a giant skeleton's laser-beam eyes. You do still have to make sure your ball lands on the fairway, though, lest you have to chop your ball out of the rough.

Hole in one

The game's packed with enjoyably goofy humour, which is both its greatest appeal and biggest downfall. The campaign features a mock anime-styled story, which is entertaining, but distracting as far as gameplay goes - to the point

where it almost feels like the anime segments and main courses should be split into two different products. The announcers are the hilarious McElroy Brothers of the podcast My Brother, My Brother And Me, which is a boon for anyone familiar with their work. Unfortunately, although their dialogue is quite funny, they feel under-utilised here, and they really offer little more than one-liners rather than flowing and coherent commentary.

The golfing itself also leaves a lot to be desired. Although the nuances brought by the different play styles of the robot pilots and the erratic behaviour of the golf ball on different levels is appreciated, there isn't enough complexity in play to rate this as anything other than arcade-style golf. Additionally, the camera feels like it's constantly fighting attempts to accurately aim, acting as a more formidable enemy than the rudimentary AI shown by the computer players.

100ft Robot Golf struggles to be more than an amusing diversion, though the inclusion of local multiplayer adds a lot to the package. If you're planning on purchasing PlayStation VR, 100ft Robot Golf is one of the first titles compatible with Sony's new headset (see our sidebar!), so at the very least you'll have a colourful and zany, if sometimes frustrating, party on your hands. ■

"UNLIKE REGULAR GOLF, HERE YOU CAN OBLITERATE STRUCTURES THAT BLOCK YOUR PATH"

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Character designs are hilarious and top-notch.
- ✓ Courses are the most diverse you'll have seen in a golf game.

GM HATES...

- ✗ The camera can be awkward and a little bit unwieldy.
- ✗ The storyline feels disconnected from the actual gameplay.

Better than...



Waialae Country Club: True Golf Classics

This fossil featured dated visuals and gameplay on its release in 1998, failing to offer a true facsimile of the sport.

Worse than...



Mario Golf: World Tour

This whimsical Nintendo club swinger is lots of fun and packed with charm, yet still feels like an accurate enough simulation for golf fans.

ALSO ON PS VR



"With its brightly coloured visuals and cartoon action, this fits VR to, well, a tee. It stays nausea-free too by staying in a third person view. Environments are fun to explore in 360 glorious degrees, and standing at the feet of these golfing behemoths and gazing upwards really impresses."

Louise Blaine, News Editor GR+

GM JUDGEMENT

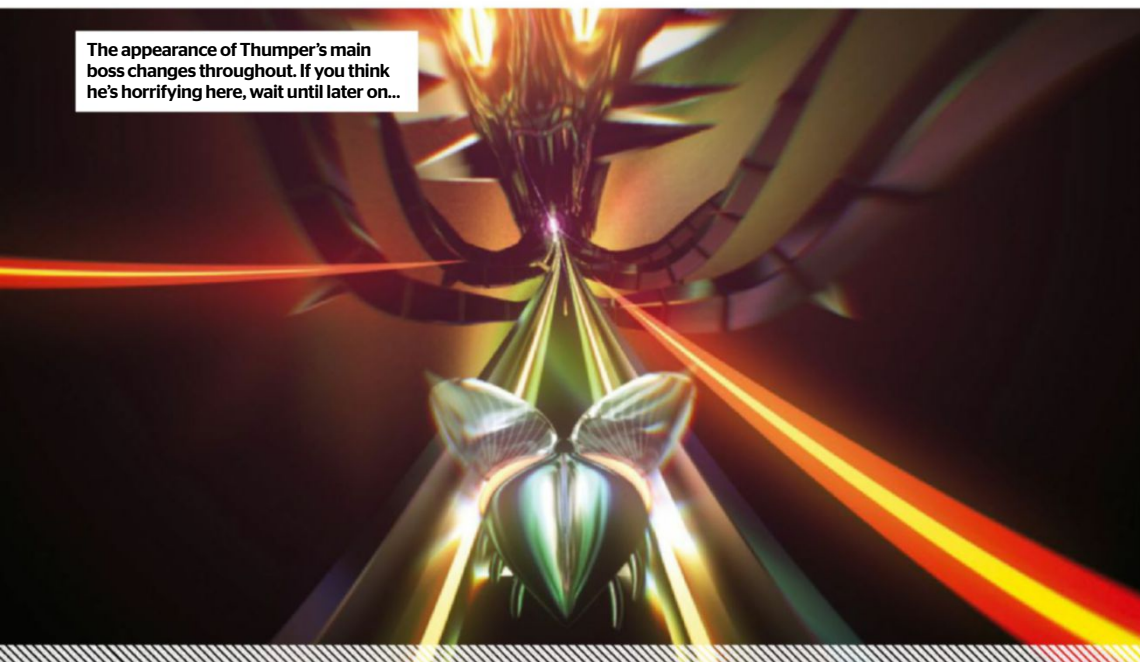
70%



A fun yet ultimately shallow romp featuring a colourful cast of crazy characters.

Brittany Vincent

The appearance of Thumper's main boss changes throughout. If you think he's horrifying here, wait until later on...



Format PS4, PC (reviewed) **Publisher** Drool **Developer** Drool **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

THUMPER

Could this lead to a fresh outbreak of Beetlemania?

Developer Drool describes its debut as a 'rhythm violence' game and – wow – it's not kidding. Thumper is a giddy rush of noise and swirling colour: a head-rattlingly brutal assault on the senses that will leave you feeling dazed and bewildered each and every time you play. Combining blistering speed (think F-Zero only somehow more so) with a percussive industrial soundtrack and nails-hard difficulty, it's absolutely not to all tastes – particularly as there's something deeply troubling about the way it combines nightmarish ambient noise and weird, discomfiting imagery.

You control a shimmering beetle hurtling down a twisting track, tapping A as it passes over bright blue cues to release a shuddering bass beat, and combining it with the analogue stick to negotiate sharp corners. Gradually, new elements are introduced – you'll brace against

incoming red hazards, or temporarily lift off to grab blue rings and boost your score. The beetle can survive a single collision, but will explode after two, returning you to the previous checkpoint. At the end of each track, a boss awaits, and you're asked to complete four sections perfectly to deliver the fatal blow so you can move on.

Speed freaked

It might sound straightforward, but it moves at such a frightening lick that even the first and simplest level is exhilarating. But while the learning curve is pleasingly steep, it doesn't always feel fair. You're given a very short window to react to hazards, and while subtle sound cues let you prepare for what's ahead, they can be hard to make out against the wail of ambient noise. It's tricky to achieve a sense of flow when irregular beats are introduced during extended sections, and the fallout from one crash usually leads to another mistake as soon as the brief recovery period has ended – the combination of piercing noise and

warping visuals makes it difficult to settle back into the rhythm.

Obviously, this is entirely deliberate, and the penalty for a single crash certainly forces you to focus on completing sections without a single mistake. But Thumper doesn't quite know when to quit. At times, it's like being asked to complete a marathon at sprinting pace. The fourth stage, for example, runs to a punishingly lengthy 30 sections, some of which are upwards of a minute long. Then the fifth adds a new feature that includes mandatory beat cues – if you miss a single one, an unavoidable Blofeld-esque laser will carve through the centre of the track. As such, its unsettling grip begins to loosen. You find yourself brute-forcing tracks through rote repetition, relying more on memory than audio or visual guidance. Given the repetitive nature of the soundtrack, it can be hard to remember whether you're coming up to the bit that goes 'thump, clap, thump, thump, clap' or 'thump, clap, clap, thump, clap'.

Beyond these irritations, Thumper is a singular and exquisitely made game that will entrance those with the stamina to rise to its merciless challenge. Games this intoxicating don't come along often – you owe it to yourself to find out whether or not you have the stomach to deal with such a vicious rhythmic assault. ■

"IT MOVES AT SUCH A FRIGHTENING LICK THAT EVEN THE FIRST AND SIMPLEST LEVEL IS EXHILARATING"

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The psychedelic sci-fi aesthetic is brilliantly disturbing.
- ✓ S-ranking a section with no misses feels seriously good.

GM HATES...

- ✗ The lack of soundtrack variety means tracks blend into one.
- ✗ Such a threatening ambience that it's hard to play for too long.

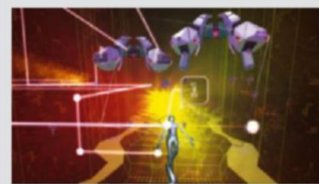
Better than...



Speed Racer: The Videogame

Not the worst licensed game ever, but Thumper better evokes the spectacle of the film's breakneck races.

Worse than...



Rez

Whether it's the Dreamcast original or PS VR remake, Tetsuya Mizuguchi's masterpiece combines entrancing visuals and beats to incredible effect.

ALSO ON PS VR



"It's great in two dimensions, but switch to the optional PS VR mode and it becomes a sensory overload of exceptional rhythm gaming. It also manages to make it oddly terrifying – bosses become looming monstrosities, making for a brilliantly intimidating experience." **Louise Blaine, News Editor GR+**

GM JUDGEMENT

78%



Scarily fast (and sometimes just scary) Thumper is rhythm gaming at its most uncompromising. **Chris Schilling**

GM Review

The Final Verdict!

Want to show your friends how cool PS VR can be? Get them to put on the Batsuit and they'll be convinced.



Format PS4 Publisher Warner Bros Developer Rocksteady ETA Out now Players 1

BATMAN: ARKHAM VR

A Dark Knight to remember

Ok, admit it, you've made Batarangs out of cardboard and duct tape, or at least thought about it. No? Just us? Well, whether you're a dedicated Bat-fanatic or not, it's hard to deny that Rocksteady's Arkham series has always done right by the Caped Crusader. The British studio just understands what makes Batman tick. So for the same team to helm a VR experience that literally lets you look down and see a utility belt around your waist is a Bat-dream come true.

Put simply, you are Batman. From chatting with Alfred, to descending into the Batcave, to donning the cowl and admiring your chiseled jaw in the mirror, Arkham VR wires you straight into the Dark Knight's brain. Suiing up is worth the price of admission alone – a respectable £15.99 – and by the time you're testing out your Batarangs, you'll be fully immersed.

But this isn't just a dressing sim, you're the World's Greatest Detective and there's a case to solve. Rather than using mechanics from the previous games, this has been built specifically from the ground up for virtual reality. Opting for nausea free exploration (no one likes a hero with motion sickness), Arkham VR is largely static, but lets you teleport from one section of an environment to the other. A Move wand indicates where you can go, and with one press of a button you're there without any unpleasant side effects. It's a smart choice, and the action makes the most of exploring your surrounding area. There's no brawling or Batmobile chases here, but there are puzzles to solve and some especially satisfying uses of the 'forensic scanner'. If you thought the murders in Arkham Knight were bad, you'll find one scene in a mortuary particularly *juicy*.

Bruce yourself

There might not be an endless mob of rowdy goons lining up for broken jaws, but Rocksteady understands your need

to explore its beautifully grim Gotham. The story has just enough fan favourite characters to introduce you to without feeling overcrowded, and whisks you through a highlight reel of locations. One vertigo-inducing scene sees you lurking on pillars above the Penguin at the top of one of the city's skyscrapers. Gazing over the edge and taking in the glorious skyline is utterly exhilarating. The story itself is only an hour long, but is executed perfectly with a dramatic conclusion showing just how powerful virtual reality can be when combined with a studio at the very top of its game. Naughty Dog, take notes please.

And thankfully there's plenty to do once the credits roll. As ever, the Riddler arrives to paint fiendish question marks and arrows all over levels, and there's a host of puzzling to do. Even ignoring the green clad one's mind-bending games, the Batcave is a treasure trove of bonus content. Here you can wield weapons from the first three games, tune into the GCPD police scanner, and study life-sized, moving recreations of infamous heroes and villains. It turns out it's more intimidating than it looks to stare Mr J in the eye. And all of this with the ability to grapple through the Batcave while winged rodents squeal as they fly past? As VR 'experiences' go, this is, like Batman himself, hard to beat. ■

"PUT SIMPLY, YOU ARE BATMAN... ARKHAM VR WIRES YOU STRAIGHT INTO THE DARK KNIGHT'S BRAIN"

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The story really is peak Batman wish fulfillment.
- ✓ This is an experience crafted to make the most of VR.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Why can't we climb into the Batmobile for a closer look?
- ✗ The story is brief – it only lasts for about an hour.

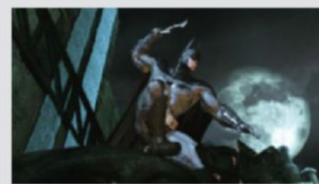
Better than...



Batman: Arkham Origins

Rocksteady's Gotham has been painstakingly crafted for VR. Accept no imitations. Take note, WB Montreal.

Worse than...



Batman: Arkham Asylum

There's no beating the masterpiece that is the Dark Knight's trip to a Serious House on Serious Earth.

i NEED TO KNOW



Not only has developer Rocksteady returned for this spin-off, but the series' iconic voice actors are back too, including Kevin Conroy as Batman and Mark Hamill as the Joker.

GM JUDGEMENT

85%



A goosebump-inducing step into the superhero's shoes – the perfect VR experience for Batfans.
Louise Blain



Fans of the original game will find plenty of references to the doomed teens of the cabin – but, don't worry, fresh blood will be just as afraid.



Format PS4 Publisher Sony Developer Supermassive Games ETA Out now Players 1

UNTIL DAWN: RUSH OF BLOOD

Scaring is caring in this demented ghost train with guns



Virtual reality is simultaneously the best and worst thing to happen to horror gaming. On the one hand, it means you can pop on a headset and completely immerse yourself in terrifying worlds handcrafted by developers; but on the other, why on Earth would you want to do that? Spinning-off from last year's PS4 exclusive original, this gory helping of *Until Dawn* changes tactics from a choose your own scare-venture to an on-rails ghost train with pistols. Don't let that change of genre put you off though – *Rush of Blood* is a truly horrifying jaunt into madness.

It doesn't matter what you're afraid of, there's something here to send a sense of dread creeping down your spine. Cackling clowns, frozen mannequins that come to life when you aren't looking, enormous Shelob-sized spiders, masked psychopaths armed with machetes, and

even a darkened abattoir full of pig corpses that just won't stay dead. While the fact that you've got guns and there's a high score to distract you is some peace of mind, this is a terror ride with only one mission – to scare the living daylights out of you. And it works.

The fairground-dressed action all takes place inside the mind of a certain original cast member, and is spread across seven levels. If you can look beyond the jump scares and target practice as you shoot everything that moves (and plenty of decoration that doesn't) each environment is lavishly grim. Snow sparkles as you hurtle through the wooded mountains shooting at target-marked evil snowmen. Peer through a door in the corridor you're inching your way down to see a bed with an axe planted firmly in the middle.

Supermassive isn't afraid to slow down the action when it counts. Your cart edges into dimly lit rooms and stops before whispers in your ear tempt you to yank off the headset altogether. One horrific encounter in particular saw us

paralysed, waiting in the dark until we were willing to look up at the source of a stream of seeping goo. Not pretty.

Terminate here

While there's plenty to enjoy – physically leaning out of the way to dodge spinning blades is a particularly horrific highlight – there are a few infuriating end of level boss fights that quickly become repetitive if you don't get them just right. It feels at odds with the game itself, which is constantly moving with fresh frights, but it doesn't take long to get back to the scares again. It's also worth noting that while it is possible to play with a wireless controller, Move wands are definitely preferable for dual-wielding weaponry. The arsenal on offer is satisfying too. Whether you're using a shotgun to blow the heads off mannequins or shattering target-marked planks blocking the path ahead with machine pistols, it's a solid shooting range.

This is a new level of frights in horror gaming. Supermassive's devs know what makes you tick in VR, understanding that leaving the inside of your minecart empty for the majority of the game will make it even worse when *things* creep in alongside you. Yes, the last level descends into Z-list horror, but this is the killer scare game to beat on PS VR. Be afraid. Be very afraid. ■

“THIS IS A TERROR RIDE WITH ONLY ONE MISSION – TO SCARE THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF YOU”

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The scares are relentless, so you can never afford to relax.
- ✓ You'll want to see every angle of this beautiful, terrifying world.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Boss battles can start to grate if you don't get it quite right.
- ✗ The final level teeters into hilariously ridiculous territory.

Better than...



House of the Dead: Overkill

This grindhouse on rails shooter has some of the smarts but its scares can't match this ghost train of VR horror.

Worse than...



Outlast

Looking at the scare-ometer, *Rush of Blood* is only marginally below a trip to Mount Massive Asylum. Night vision terror clinches *Outlast* the top spot.

i NEED TO KNOW



The action isn't over after seven levels. 20 collectible skittles are hidden for you to shoot in each level, and there are four difficulty ratings to try and survive – one of which is pleasantly called 'Psychotic.'

GM JUDGEMENT

81%



With more fear than most games in its menu sequence alone, this is a masterclass in frights.
Louise Blain

GM Review

The Final Verdict!

NOW PLAYING

This month's biggest time sinks on Team GM

1 JOB SIMULATOR PS4

I can't remember the last time I laughed this hard playing a game. From chucking donuts at your boss to photocopying your brain, this VR title is the best kind of goofy chaos.

Robin Valentine, Acting Editor

2 THUMPER PS4

Oof, there's hard, and then there's Thumper. I adore this rhythm-action game's visual style and sound design, but I think I might be too cack-handed to actually play it...

Robin Valentine, Acting Editor

3 POKÉMON X AND Y 3DS

To prepare for Pokémon Sun & Moon, which are amazing, I've returned to look over the hordes of incredible creatures I've kept imprisoned since 2013. Who's the real monster?

Ben Griffin, Senior Staff Writer

4 FIFA 17 PC

Is it just me playing this on PC? Console kids don't know what they're missing - I've seen Arsene Wenger's nose hairs in downsampled 4K.

Ben Griffin, Senior Staff Writer

5 FORZA HORIZON 3 X0

Forget about the business of actually racing - I can lose hours just happily bombing around in a Lamborghini Centenario taking in the scenery of this beautiful take on Australia.

Rob Crossland, Art Editor

6 THE DIVISION X0

I've levelled yet another character to 30, ready for update 1.4. I don't even want to think about what my hours played count is by now...

Rob Crossland, Art Editor



OFFICE LUNCHTIME GAME OF THE MONTH:

KEEP TALKING AND NOBODY EXPLODES PS4

This game of co-op bomb defusal has got us yelling even more at lunchtime than Overcooked.



AoE moves are abundant, and rare powers, such as stout sniper Nix's ultimate, pass through cover.

Format PC Publisher Trion Worlds Developer Trion Worlds ETA Out now Players 1-8

ATLAS REACTOR

A cerebral brawler worth a reaction



misdirection is a surprisingly rare ingredient in strategy games. That's because, no matter how good

the AI, conniving remains a distinctly human quality. So it's smart of free-to-play, turn-based multiplayer arena battler, *Atlas Reactor*, to double down on PvP deception, building itself around manipulating expectations.

Its twist? Turns play out simultaneously. Each timed round starts with all eight players locking in their go. You'll see

some feedback about what your three teammates plan, but no idea what the enemy will do, or - importantly - when. That's because turns play out in four distinct phases. Prep moves are often weak but go first, Dash ones come next to scoot you out of danger, and then Blast powers lay colourfully devastating waste to what's left. After that, you all move to new locations and do your best to predict what's coming.

Carefully balanced cooldowns prevent this being an interminable bout of shadow boxing, though - use up your Dash on a failed gamble and you'll suffer for it. Still, thanks to a snappy win

condition of first team to five kills, or the most kills if you hit 20 rounds, it's never too much of a downer to drop a life. And when it all comes together, it can be a satisfying brain-tickling rush.

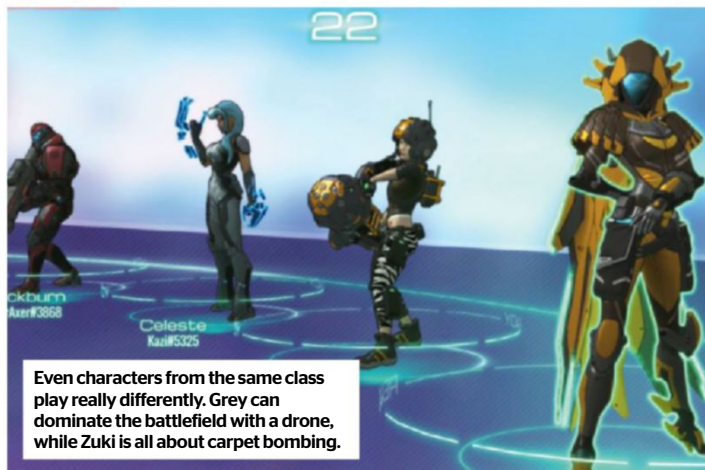
Blue skies, thinking

Bright as those moments are - and with a cartoony futurist aesthetic that's Blizzard B-team meets Sunset Overdrive, they're certainly pretty bright - what will ultimately sustain enthusiasts in the long-term is figuring out the interactions of the 21-strong roster, and the best balance of mods to buff each one's tray of five powers. If only the map pool were anything like as varied.

The unlock path, meanwhile, is gentle, albeit strewn with some annoying microtransactions. But with these thankfully limited to purely cosmetic loot, it feels refreshingly inessential to pay more than the cast unlock fee. The flip side is that, if anything, *Atlas Reactor* could use a few more obvious progression hooks. Although each match is engrossing in its own right, it takes a while to build enough momentum and work its way up to that 'one-more-go' magnetism. Dig in, though, and you'll find these candied looks are hiding a deceptively deep game of wits.

■ Matt Clapham

76%



Even characters from the same class play really differently. Grey can dominate the battlefield with a drone, while Zuki is all about carpet bombing.



Format PC Publisher Tinybuild Developer Sundae Month ETA Out now Players 1

DIARIES OF A SPACEPORT JANITOR

Welcome to Mess Eisely

Bustling extraterrestrial market stalls. Street vendors hawking sizzling otherworldly meats and a million exotic goods. It's an undeniably charming setting, but as a lowly, skint 'sanidrone', you aren't here to get involved. All you're needed for is to clear up the rubbish.

Diaries feels like playing an NPC's life in somebody else's fantastic space adventure. You trawl the streets, scooping up trash to burn for a pitiful wage, or hold on to in the hopes of selling it on. Every day, you must drain your purse to fill your grumbling belly or buy meds to 'gender-shift', a concept that's barely explored. Then you pen a quick diary entry, sleep, and do it all again.



Your quest is to leave this life behind. Not that it starts well - an early flirtation with adventuring leaves you cursed by a floating, roaring skull. Getting shot of it will involve more drudgery, including a fetch quest and lengthy item hunt. For a game that bills itself as an anti-adventure, it's a shame Diaries has hung onto the boring bits of a thousand RPGs.

But you pursue all that at your leisure. This is a game of atmosphere and perhaps making a point about capitalism's smallest cogs. It's light and airy, revelling in telling you your gender is now 'Susan Sarandon'. As a virtual environment, it is by turns vibrant, disorientating, captivating, and trippy. In terms of play, it's bland and rhythmic, which may be the whole point. One for virtual tourists only.

■ Matt Clapham

52%



Format PS4, XO (reviewed), PC Pub GMG Dev Splendy ETA Out now Players 1

THE BUNKER

Makes death by nuclear fire seem appealing

Years ago, a genius called Toru Iwatani created Pac-Man. But what if some idiot had persuaded Iwatani to make Pac-Man a game and a film? It'd be twice as good! More likely, we'd have had to watch people run around in coloured sheets shouting 'boo! Occasionally, we might get the honour of pressing a button. That's basically what it's like playing The Bunker, except not as interesting.

You 'play' (more 'watch') the adventures of a man who has spent his entire life in a bunker, thanks to a devastating nuclear attack. The Bunker is presented in live action, with real actors giving so-so performances. At first you'll go through the mundane daily routines of bunker life - until disaster strikes. But look past the live-action gimmick and this is just a dull point-and-click adventure. You scroll a cursor around environments looking for anything you can interact with. But instead of solving brain-teasers, you're



usually just triggering another cutscene. The most challenging The Bunker gets is dragging a circle into a bigger circle to open a door. Which is how doors work in this world, apparently.

Flawed as the game was, Fallout 4's vaults could be truly immersive because you were free to explore and learn more about these eerie nuclear strongholds through your own intuition. The Bunker, alternatively, feels like a faulty DVD we keep having to press 'play' on. But it's a dull movie and a tedious game.

Incidentally, Iwatani had a cameo in last year's Adam Sandler vehicle, Pixels, which was a huge flop. Further proof that games and movies should just stay the hell away from each other.

■ Tom Stone

32%

HOT DOWNLOADS

The latest DLC and expansions explored



Another month and another deluge of DLC washes down the data pipes. To keep things on a watery theme, where better to start than **Rocket League**, which makes waves with a free update to introduce the **AquaDome** - an underwater arena which is pretty much a giant ostentatious goldfish bowl. If you hate free stuff, there are two new premium cars to throw your money at - **Proteus** and **Triton**. Just be careful not to flood the engine.

Strategic fantasy battler **Endless Legend** also plunges into the wet stuff with its **Tempest** expansion. Naval warfare debuts as a new type of battle, while the **Morgawr**, a race of hostile amphibious folk, join the ranks of the game's major factions. As well as storms, fog, and debris to contend with when exploring new ocean regions, a mighty leviathan also lurks somewhere in the depths...

Back on dry land, the latest **GTA Online** DLC means the streets of Los Santos are buzzing with maniacs on motorbikes. As well as a load of new vehicles, clothes, tattoos, and weapons, the **Bikers** update means we can have our own motorcycle club and hang out with our motorcycle buddies in a motorcycle clubhouse. Best of all, you can now perform a ride-by i.e. kick pedestrians in the face from the comfort of your bike.

From two wheels to four - the first of **Forza Horizon 3**'s monthly car packs, the **Smoking Tire Pack**, delivers seven new rides, including a 2016 Aston Martin Vulcan and a BMW M2 Coupé to burn around in. Five more car packs, each adding seven new cars to the roster, are scheduled, with the last one due in March.

And finally, nothing to do with water or wheels, is **Street Fighter V**. Hot on the heels of the sixth DLC fighter, Urien, Capcom has released an array of Halloween-themed DLC. There are seven costumes befitting the seasonal celebration's dress-code, and also a Halloween arena, which is the Russia stage given a suitably spooky makeover. Be quick though - the Halloween content is only available until 29 November.





FINAL FANTASY XV



RECLAIM YOUR THRONE

29.11.16

PRE-ORDER NOW AT amazon.co.uk

SQUARE ENIX



XBOX ONE



PS4



FINAL FANTASY XV © 2016 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved. MAIN CHARACTER DESIGN: TETSUYA NOMURA. FINAL FANTASY, SQUARE ENIX and the SQUARE ENIX logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Square Enix Holdings Co., Ltd. "X" is a registered trademark and "PS4" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are the properties of their respective owners. Amazon, the Amazon logo and Amazon.co.uk are registered trademarks of Amazon EU SARL or its affiliates. Free Super Saver Delivery and Unlimited One-Day Delivery with Amazon Prime are available on eligible orders. Terms and Conditions apply. See Amazon.co.uk for details.





POKÉMON RED AND BLUE

Why don't you come with us on a Magikarp-et ride



For all the talk of gaming finally entering the mainstream, Leon Kennedy and Nathan Drake still remain far from household names. But if there's one character that perplexed parents recognise, it's Pikachu. "Oh, he's one of those Pokémons", they'll coo, forcing you to correct them on pronunciation. But the point is they recognise the little yellow beast. The point is Pokémon Red and Blue represent one of those very rare moments when gaming crossed over and became mass culture.

The origins

Most of us have heard the story of how the Pokémon concept was born out of Game Freak founder Satoshi Tajiri's childhood passion for bug collecting. What you might not know, however, is how long that germ of an idea took to reach fruition. Pokémon Red and Green (as they were in Japan) were actually in development for six years and missed several internal deadlines before finally reaching Japanese store shelves in 1996.

If that sounds like a long time to spend working on a Game Boy title, it's worth bearing in mind that Pokémon's core production staff comprised just nine people, and this young team was starting with a completely blank slate, designing each of the 151 catchable critters from scratch. And once their labours were complete, Pokémon launched with little fanfare. It was 18 long months before Red and Green topped the weekly sales charts in its home country.

By then, of course, plans to bring the games to Western markets were well underway. There was concern at Nintendo, however, that the iconic roster of 151 creatures might be a touch cutesy for tastes outside of Japan, with the company going so far as to commission a batch of tougher, more 'Western' designs as replacements. Thankfully, Nintendo's president disagreed.

The legend

So in October 1999, Game Freak's vision for Pokémon arrived on European shores unmolested, launching alongside the anime series that would soon make Pikachu the face of the franchise. The Pokémon Trading Card Game launched

Developer Game Freak
Publisher Nintendo
Released 1999
Format Game Boy
Get it 3DS eShop

just a month later, completing the first attack wave in the brand's multimedia bombardment of consumers.

Pokémon, of course, was an immediate and spectacular hit in the West - and deservedly so. Red and Blue hold up tremendously well, and the strength of the original line-up of pocket monsters has arguably never been matched. While the game's overworld sprite work was pleasant but basic, every Pokémon exuded charm. Tajiri had once hoped his game would rekindle a sense of connection to the natural world among the children who played it, evoking the joy of finding some curious creepy crawly beneath an upturned stone. In a sense, he succeeded, and we

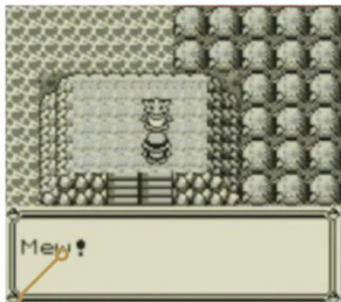
scrutinised each weird and wonderful addition to our Pokédex with the discerning gaze of an entomologist.

Before long, you'd amass a towering collection of Pokéballs, each containing a potential addition to your team. And it turns out this tremendous range of available options created a strong sense of attachment to our preferred portable pets. This Gyrados is *mine*, we thought. We raised it from a worthless Magikarp into a fearsome beast, and we wouldn't trade it for the world. Although we could possibly be tempted by a Mew...

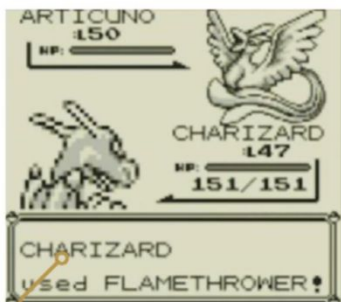
The legacy

Pokémon remains a flagship franchise for Nintendo, but it's difficult to overstate the sheer degree of popularity and penetration that Red and Blue achieved. While it took a year and a half for Pokémon to bother the upper reaches of the charts in Japan, the first 18 months in

"THE STRENGTH OF THE ORIGINAL LINE-UP OF POCKET MONSTERS HAS ARGUABLY NEVER BEEN MATCHED"



Mew was simply a last minute addition by programmer Shigeki Morimoto to fill cartridge space.



Many franchise conventions were there from the beginning, including the choice of three starter Pokémon.



There have been more than 900 episodes of the Pokémon anime since its Japanese launch in 1997.

Europe saw the launch of Pokémon Yellow, Pokémon: The First Movie, Pokémon Stadium, Pokémon Snap, Pokémon Pinball, and Pokémon: The Movie 2000. Every one of these projects was successful, and a torrent of licensed merch further bloated the coffers of the newly-formed Pokémon Company.

The second generation of Pokémon games – Silver and Gold – followed in 2001, cementing the series' position as role-playing royalty, as well as prompting a fresh wave of Pokémania. And if the wild enthusiasm for the franchise seems to have dimmed in the intervening years, Pokémon still remains one of gaming's brightest lights. Pokémon X and Y have sold more than 15 million copies to date, and Pokémon Go smashed App Store download records in its first week.

Pokémon Red and Blue established the template for creating a truly worldwide gaming phenomenon. When hopeful publishers launch a barrage of apps, merch, and movies, it's the Game Freak success story they're attempting to emulate. But what most lesser pretenders often seem to forget is that, first and foremost, Pokémon has always been a fantastic game. ■



Series Spotlight

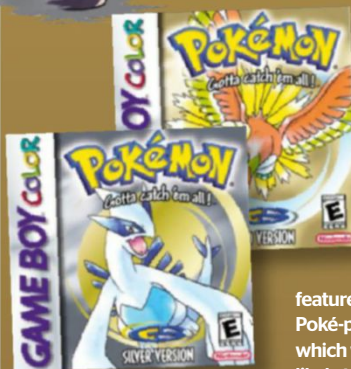
Gotta catch 'em all



1 Pokémon Silver and Gold

(Game Boy Color – 2001)

Game Freak's second generation of games introduced the steamy concept of breeding to the Pokémon world, allowing your favourite animal companions to knock boots if left alone at the Pokémon Day Care. Other new features included held items for your Poké-pals, and a new day and night cycle which would influence the varmints most likely to be lurking in the long grass.



4 Pokémon Black and White

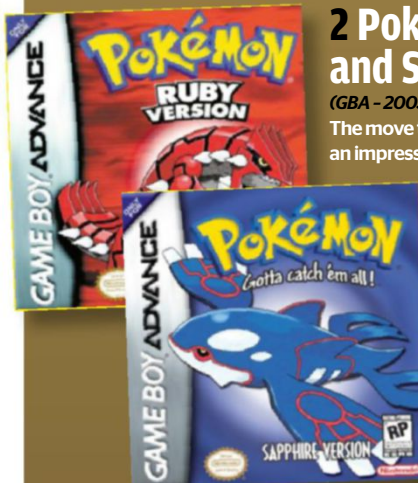
(DS – 2011)

The fifth generation of the franchise introduced seasons and triple battles, as well as making some significant enhancements to the barebones animations accompanying each Pokémon attack. And, in a first for the series, no Pokémon from previous generations can be caught until you've finished the main game, incentivising players to get busy bashing the dastardly Team Plasma. Fortunately, there's a total of 156 brand new beasts to pursue in the meantime.

2 Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire

(GBA – 2003)

The move to Game Boy Advance prompted an impressive graphical upgrade for the series, and Game Freak's artists took full advantage by designing 135 brand new Pokémon for its third generation (bringing the total to 386). Feature-wise, Ruby and Sapphire saw the introduction of abilities and double battles, as well as Pokémon Contests that rewarded you for that super cute Sceptile or mega intelligent Psyduck.



3 Pokémon Diamond and Pearl

(DS – 2007)

Generation four shunted the series to the DS, and Game Freak made use of the hardware's Wi-Fi functionality to let players battle, trade, and communicate online for the first time. The newly introduced Global Trading System essentially acted as a bulletin board for Pokémon, so you could hunt down that elusive Stunky you had a weird hankering for and make an exchange.



5 Pokémon X and Y

(3DS – 2013)

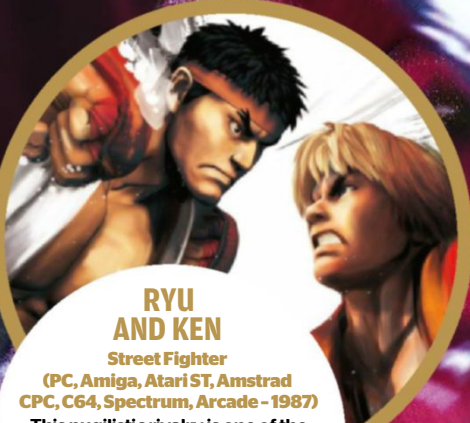
The sixth generation proved to be especially transformative for the series, as X and Y dragged hundreds upon hundreds of Pokémon kicking and screaming into the exciting third dimension. The results are, without a doubt, beautiful, but it's been the introduction of Fairy type Pokémon, Mega Evolutions, and the Player Search System that have had the greater impact on gameplay.



SIX OF THE BEST... RIVALRIES

The competitive characters that just can't settle for second fiddle

One of the many pleasures afforded us by Pokémon Red and Blue was the ability to name your in-game adversary. At the game's outset the lab-coated Professor Oak patiently explained that his grandson has been your rival "since you were a baby", which seems weird, before callously asking for a reminder of his own grandchild's name. The kid's standing right there, Oak. Out of a sense of unwavering loyalty to the anime, many young players dutifully bestowed their nemesis with the official title, Gary. Others opted for flat out profanity, or the names of hated real-life bullies. Personally, we'll never forget BINBAGS, the spiky-haired whelp that plagued our travels across the Kanto region. But hard as it may be to believe, gaming history is littered with rivalries every bit as intense as the one we once shared with BINBAGS. Here's our pick of the competitive crop. ■



RYU AND KEN

Street Fighter

(PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Amstrad CPC, C64, Spectrum, Arcade - 1987)

This pugilistic rivalry is one of the oldest in gaming. The two trained together under their master Gouken, and the red headband Ryu wears was actually a gift from his crimson-clad frenemy.



PHOENIX WRIGHT AND MILES EDGECWORTH

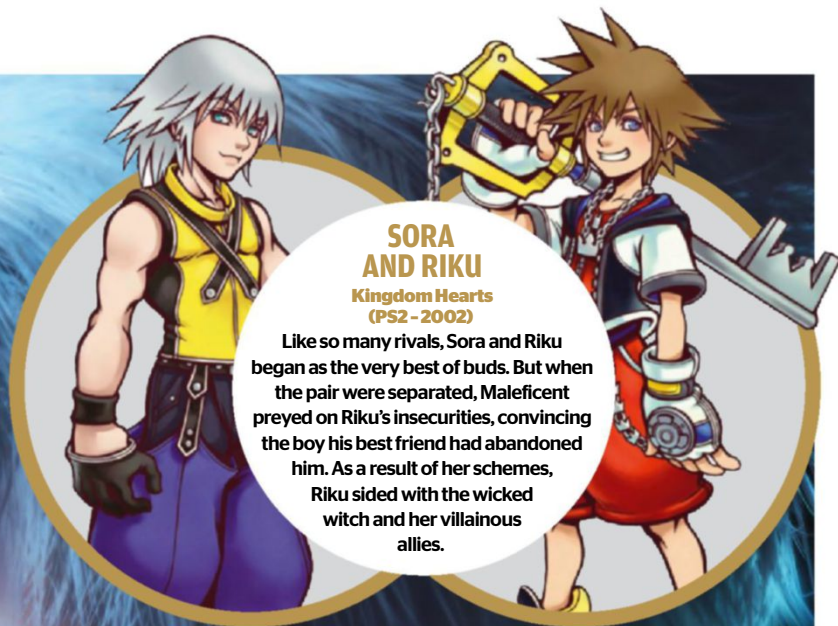
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney
(DS - 2006)

These adversaries were once childhood friends, but while Wright entered law to defend the falsely accused, Edgeworth prized victory in court above all else. Edgeworth may be less shady these days, but he's still one of Wright's greatest courtroom opponents.

DANTE AND VERGIL

Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening
(PC, PS2 - 2005)

Dante's twin brother may look an awful lot like him, but Vergil has fully embraced the demonic side of his nature. So, while Dante has dedicated himself to protecting humans, Vergil is wholeheartedly committed to the endless and not-so-compassionate pursuit of power, whatever the cost.



**SORA
AND RIKU**
Kingdom Hearts
(PS2 - 2002)

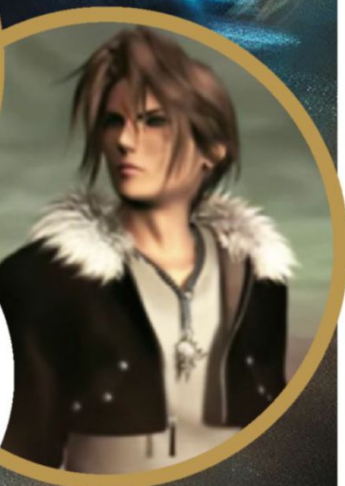
Like so many rivals, Sora and Riku began as the very best of buds. But when the pair were separated, Maleficent preyed on Riku's insecurities, convincing the boy his best friend had abandoned him. As a result of her schemes, Riku sided with the wicked witch and her villainous allies.



**SQUALL AND
SEIFER**

Final Fantasy VIII
(PC, PS1 - 1999)

These sparring buddies need to simmer down. First Seifer scarred Squall, then Squall scarred Seifer, and when the two gunblade specialists were deployed to the Siege of Dollet, Seifer went a bit nuts. Soon after, he swanned off with an evil sorceress. Good riddance.



**MARIO AND
SONIC**

Mario & Sonic at the
Olympic Games
(Wii, DS - 2007)

These mascots may come together to compete in Sega's celebration of sport, but their rivalry represents one of gaming's greatest and most long-standing grudges.

Grab Bag

Retro gems from every era

Awesome Boss!



Elite Beat Agents

Format DS Developer iNiS Released 2007

By the end of this rhythm-action classic, you've used your stylus-tapping skills to cheer all manner of folk out of defeat and despair. So when your eponymous squad finds themselves imprisoned in stone by the invading Rhombulans, it's fitting that everyone you've ever helped comes together to banish the alien threat. To the rock-hard tune of Jumpin' Jack Flash, naturally.

Classic Moment!



Unreal Tournament

Format PC Developer Epic Games Released 1999

Epic's arena shooter was a blisteringly quick celebration of in-game weaponry, boasting one of the finest arsenals gaming has ever seen. Top of the pile was the Redeemer, a special weapon hidden on certain maps that fired a thermonuclear warhead. Best of all, you could steer the missile deep into enemy territory to bag one of those coveted *m-m-m-monster kill* announcements.

Remake Request!



Messiah

Format PC Developer Shiny Entertainment Released 2000

They *really* don't make 'em like this any more. Playing as the cherubic Bob, you're tasked by the Lord Above with cleaning a futuristic earth of corruption and sleaze. To do so, you'll possess civilians, evade police, and resist Satanic temptation in your quest to save the world from sin. Oh, and you'll also shoot a lot of people. A fresh take on this open-ended curio would be heavenly.



The suit's not *quite* as bulky as it looks – that armour is made of flexible rubber.

A DARK KNIGHT TO REMEMBER

Want to be the Batman? We catch up with professional prop artist **Julian Checkley** about his world record breaking Caped Crusader cosplay

Let's be honest. The closest we're going to get to feeling like Batman is donning the PlayStation VR headset and exploring Rocksteady's *Batcave* in 3D. Julian Checkley, on the other hand, is almost too ready for what happens when that Bat-Signal appears in the grim clouds above Gotham City. Owner of Order 66 Effects, the crafting expert has not only built himself the ultimate Batman costume, but also a Guinness World Record breaking 23 working gadgets to match.

"Typically I've always sided with the bad guys in comic books and movies. Usually because they have the coolest costumes and storylines," he explains. "Batman is that unique mix of a bad guy doing good. Whether he's a good guy or bad guy really depends on what angle you view him from. Lawless vigilante or crime fighting hero? Batman has been with us now for over 75 years and has become ingrained in our lives. But yes, it really just comes down to the fact that he has one of the coolest costumes in crime fighting!"

Checkley's suit isn't just any old Bat rags – he's specifically selected the Caped Crusader's garb from *Arkham Origins*. But why? "I have always wanted my very own Batsuit... Being a fairly big guy (6'6" 255lbs), I always felt my physical build never suited any of the costumes portrayed in the Batman movies," he says. "It wasn't until I saw the suit in *Arkham Origins* that I decided this was the one for me. My rule is 'will I fit into the silhouette of the character?' and in this case I did." After buying a PS3 to play *Origins*, he sat down to work out how to construct his very own crime fighting gear.

Wayne check

The suit is made of a combination of 3D printed parts, sculpted urethane rubber, an undersuit (complete with orthopaedic back support), a pair of cyberpunk boots that Checkley spent hours hunting for, and, crucially, a strong cape. The prop expert then painstakingly 'weathered' the suit with multiple layers of paint to make sure it had that straight out of *Arkham* feel.

It was only after the suit was finished that the fun truly began and he started on the soon to be 23 fully functioning Bat gadgets. While some of these are



These two smoke bombs are the least of your worries if you meet Checkley and his fireball shooter.

relatively normal, like the Bat-flask and the battery pack, there's also a pneumatic tranquilizer gun, gauntlet video screens, and, oh yes, the *strobe stun gun*. "The stun gun was the last one we created and probably the hardest gadget to put together," confirms Checkley. "It runs at about 2000w and works like a flash gun on steroids. SWAT teams use them to temporarily blind their targets before engaging them. So we thought this might be something Batman could carry on his utility belt. The hardest part was miniaturising everything into the chassis of the gun. It still had to look cool like something Wayne Industries would produce. After lots of fiddling and rewiring we got something that looks badass and pumps out a huge pulse of light!"

"EVERY GADGET HAD TO SOMEHOW INTEGRATE WITH THE BATSUIT"



The suit features a built-in, multi-channel, multi-frequency two-way radio.



Checkley created traditional Bat gadgets but also ones directly influenced by weapons in the games.



To create just the right authentic battle-worn effect, Checkley layered on earthy colours of paint before adding various scrapes and bumps with chrome highlights.



Not only did the team have to build all the gadgets, they had to make them fit on the suit. Where *does* Batman keep his Bat Tracking Beacon? "We had many head scratching moments trying to work out how to get all these marvellous toys on to the suit,"

Checkley reveals. "This was one of the stipulations for the world record - that every gadget had to somehow integrate with the Batsuit. In the game, when Batman wants to use his two and a half foot long line launcher he just reaches beneath his cape and this hulking bit of kit suddenly appears. Sadly in real life we had to come up with innovative ways of hiding our gadgets. Most hook to the utility belt or are stowed in special pouches and pockets.

One of the more inventive hiding places was finding a home for the 'cowl respirator' which stows perfectly in the right knee pad armour."

Oh, and did we mention the *fireball* shooter? It's Checkley's favourite. "We came across an amazing new

magician's flash paper shooter which basically helps to create the illusion of making things disappear in a puff of flame and smoke," he explains. "We got hold of one and installed it into one of the gauntlets... It will shoot a fireball anywhere from two to ten feet.

Now this isn't strictly a classic Batman gadget, but it could definitely be something he might use to stun his foe."

Cape escape

While the working gizmos got him the Guinness World Record for 'most functioning gadgets on a cosplay suit', Checkley clearly still has Bats on the brain. "You never know, there might be one or two more gadgets sitting on our work benches waiting to be tested," he

teases. "There were a few we didn't get a chance to create, so we might hold those back for a special project. Or maybe just in case someone tries to break our record next year?" Let's see them try. ■ **Louise Blain**

See this!

Marvel at more Bat info and all of Checkley's gadgets in the Guinness World Records 2017: Gamer's Edition, which is out now and available from high street and online book shops.



GLOBAL MASTER

Japanese gaming toys you need in your life



SAMURAI WANT

OK, so it's not exactly cheap at just over £2000, but it is *Darth Vader as a samurai*. Inspired by 'musha ningyo', traditional Japanese warrior dolls, Lord Vader measures up to an imposing 10.6" and comes complete with intricate armour, helmet, and weaponry. This is the toy you're looking for...

BEAN THERE

Because you definitely need to learn to use chopsticks *again*. The adorable Pikachu

Hajimete Manner

Bean game is meant to be used to teach children the art of chopsticks, but we just want it to pick up the adorable Pokémon one by one, over and over. I choose you! And you! And, of course, you.

AMAZING ALTERNATIVE

Like a real-life version of Super Mario Maker (but with more metal balls) this 3D Maze game can be customised in over 120,000 ways. All controlled via a joystick, this is a bizarrely appealing analogue version of the Italian plumber's adventures.



GM Subscribe

Never Miss An Issue!



CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGE

For all your multiformat needs, subscribe today to the world's most dedicated gaming mag. We have three options to choose from...

PRINT

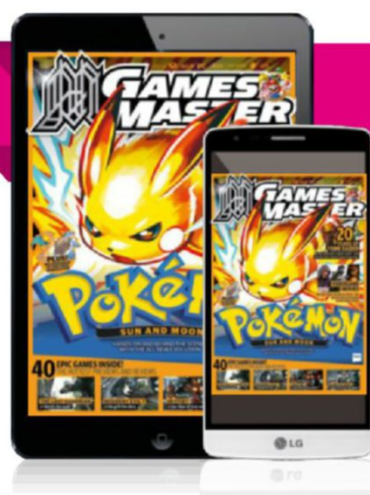


**6 MONTHLY
SUBSCRIPTION**

£26.50

- It costs less than buying it in the shops!
- Plus get **Batman: Arkham Knight** on PS4 or Xbox One!

DIGITAL



**6 MONTHLY
SUBSCRIPTION**

£14.00

- The cheapest way to get your GM!
- Every issue is packed with trailers and videos!
- Download instantly on the day of release!

PRINT & DIGITAL



**6 MONTHLY
SUBSCRIPTION**

£33.50

- The best value GM package!
- Every print issue delivered to you!
- A digital copy for iOS or Android!
- New trailers and videos each month!
- Get **Batman: Arkham Knight** on PS4 or Xbox One!

**SPECIAL
OFFER!**

SUBSCRIBE

SUBSCRIBE TO GAMESMASTER TODAY!

**GET BATMAN:
ARKHAM KNIGHT
ON PS4 OR XBOX ONE
WHEN YOU START
A PRINT OR
PRINT + DIGITAL
SUBSCRIPTION**



**GO ONLINE: MYFAVOURITEMAGAZINES.CO.UK/GMSUBS
OR CALL 0344 848 2852 AND QUOTE GMSP2R FOR
PRINT, GMSP2T FOR BUNDLE OR GMSP2L FOR DIGITAL.**

(Please use the full web address to claim your free gifts. Digital only subscriptions do not include free gift.)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS Gift is available to new UK print subscribers and print + digital subscribers paying by monthly Direct Debit only. Please allow up to 30 days for delivery of your gift. Gift is subject to availability. In the event of stocks becoming exhausted, we reserve the right to replace with items of a similar value. Prices and savings quoted are compared to buying full priced UK print and digital issues. You will receive 13 issues in a year. You can write to us or call us to cancel your subscription within 14 days of purchase. Your subscription is for the minimum term specified and will expire at the end of the current term. Payment is non-refundable after the 14 day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. Your statutory rights are not affected. Prices correct at point of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions please visit: myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/terms. Offer ends 01/12/2016

GM Comp

Win This!



RARE CANDY

Win a New 3DS XL and a signed copy of Pokémon Sun!

The seventh generation of Pokémon is almost upon us, and what better way to celebrate the dawning of a new era in developer Game Freak's enduring series than with a chance to win a copy of Pokémon Sun and a spanking New Nintendo 3DS XL handheld to play it on.

But that's not all. You won't just be getting any old copy of Pokémon Sun. No sir – you'll be getting something very rare and unique. You won't find another one exactly like it anywhere in the wild, no

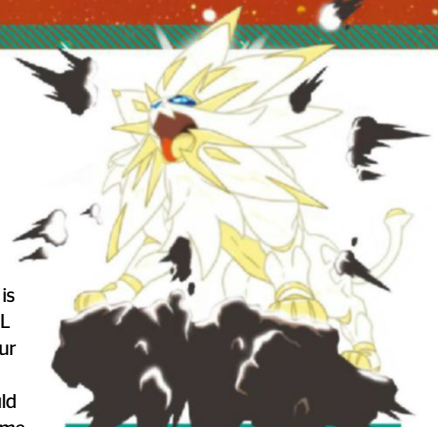
matter how long you spend lurking in tall grass. This is the Celebi of copies.

Why so rare? Well, this copy of Pokémon Sun is signed by Junichi Masuda who, as you will know because you've already devoured this issue's extensive Pokémon Sun and Moon feature, has worked on the Pokémon series since the very start, and is *kind of a big deal* at Game Freak. Composer, designer, director, producer... you name it, Masuda's done it. Except for changing the soap in the office bathroom. Someone else does that. Not his job. He's too busy coming up with brilliant new names for Pokémon to be bothered with refilling soap dispensers.

All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning this awesome prize is head to our competition webpage (URL on the right). Enter your details and your answer to the question below by the closing date, 8 December, and you could soon find yourself answering to the name of Mr or Miss Winner.

Q Which Sun-exclusive Pokémon has the new ability Full Metal Body?

- A.** Solgaleo
- B.** Sandygast
- C.** Lunala



HOW TO ENTER

ONLINE

Make your way over to <http://bit.ly/gmsun3ds> to enter, where you can fill in your details and submit your answer.

Terms and conditions: By entering this Competition you are agreeing to receive details of future offers from Future Publishing Ltd. The closing date is 8 December 2016. By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules, which are summarised below but can be viewed in full at www.futurepub.com/competition-rules. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via any agency or similar) and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The Company reserves the right in its sole discretion to substitute any prize with cash or a prize of comparable value. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is open to all GB residents of 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing and any party involved in the competition or their households. By entering a Competition you give permission to use your name, likeness and personal information in connection with the Competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the Company upon receipt and will not be returned. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. Details of winners will be available on request within three months of the closing date. If you are a winner, receipt by you of any prize is conditional upon you complying with (amongst other things) the Competition Rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither the Company nor any associated third parties shall have any liability to you in connection with your use and/or possession of your prize.



NEXT MONTH...

GamesMaster 311

ON SALE 1 DECEMBER



GAME OF THE YEAR

12 months of hits - but which will be crowned GM's favourite?

Also next issue...

It's a review overload, with
Dishonored 2,
Call Of Duty: Infinite Warfare,
and Battlefield 1

...plus loads more!



Due to the unpredictable nature of the gaming world, all contents are subject to change.

GAME GUIDE



Welcome to GM's carefully collated list of the most essential gaming experiences you can undertake right now. If even one of the 50 games on here has passed you by, get a shift on post-haste

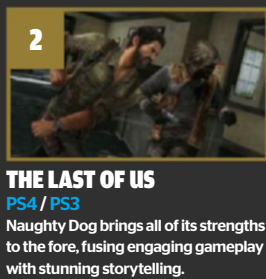


1

DARK SOULS III

PS4 / XO / PC

The first game might be closer to fans' hearts, but this is Souls - and gaming - at its current-gen finest.



2

THE LAST OF US

PS4 / PS3

Naughty Dog brings all of its strengths to the fore, fusing engaging gameplay with stunning storytelling.



3

THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

PS4 / XO / PC

An epic proposition that truly lives up to its promise. Engaging, mature, and unbelievably vast.

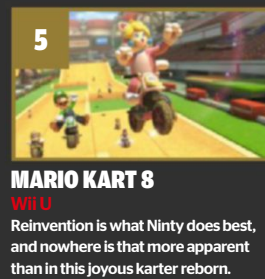


4

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360

The most comprehensive sandbox going, full of wonderful distractions and typical Rockstar humour.

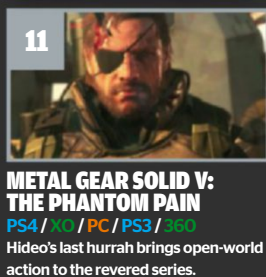


5

MARIO KART 8

Wii U

Reinvention is what Ninty does best, and nowhere is that more apparent than in this joyous karter reborn.

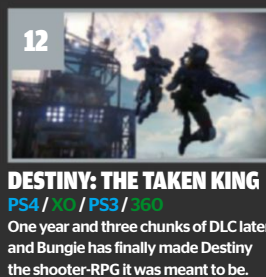


11

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360

Hideo's last hurrah brings open-world action to the revered series.



12

DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING

PS4 / XO / PS3 / 360

One year and three chunks of DLC later and Bungie has finally made Destiny the shooter-RPG it was meant to be.



13

HER STORY

PC / Mobile

An engrossing mystery that makes us believe in FMV again. Utterly, wonderfully unique.



14

SUPER MARIO MAKER

Wii U

The most brilliantly accessible level creation game around, dripping with Nintendo's slick signature style.



15

ROCKET LEAGUE

PS4 / XO / PC

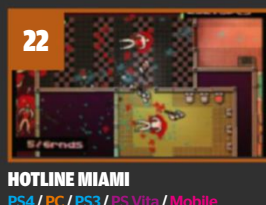
2015's surprise hit combines football and motors to create an amazingly universal multiplayer experience.



21

GUILD WARS 2: HEART OF THORNS

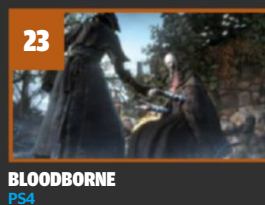
PC



22

HOTLINE MIAMI

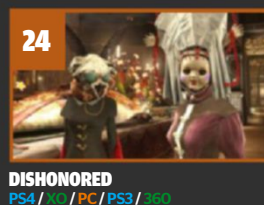
PS4 / PC / PS3 / PS Vita / Mobile



23

BLOODBORNE

PS4



24

DISHONORED

PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360



25

RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

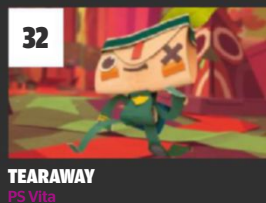
XO / PC / 360



31

MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR

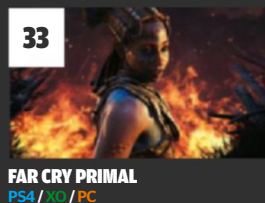
PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360



32

TEARAWAY

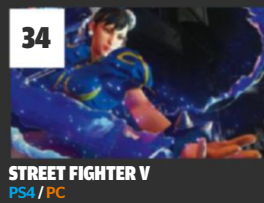
PS Vita



33

FAR CRY PRIMAL

PS4 / XO / PC



34

STREET FIGHTER V

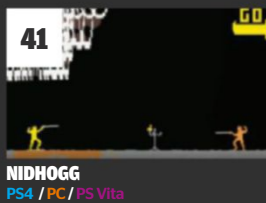
PS4 / PC



35

BATTLEFIELD 4

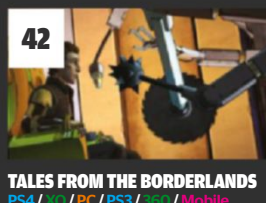
PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360



41

NIDHOGG

PS4 / PC / PS Vita



42

TALES FROM THE BORDERLANDS

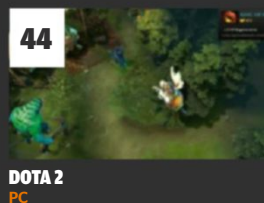
PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360 / Mobile



43

INSIDE

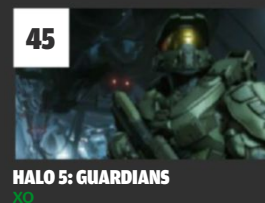
PS4 / XO / PC



44

DOTA 2

PC



45

HALO 5: GUARDIANS

XO

FORMAT BUYER'S GUIDE

Just bought a spanking new console? Configured a new rig? Or perhaps you've a new handheld ready to go? Whichever machine you've got, GM is here to ensure you're clued in on the top exclusives



- 1 THE LAST OF US REMASTERED
- 2 JOURNEY
- 3 UNCHARTED 4
- 4 TOWERFALL ASCENSION
- 5 BLOODBORNE



- 1 HALO 5: GUARDIANS
- 2 KALIMBA
- 3 FORZA HORIZON 2
- 4 QUANTUM BREAK
- 5 ORI & THE BLIND FOREST



- 1 MARIO KART 8
- 2 SUPER MARIO MAKER
- 3 SPLATOON
- 4 BAYONETTA 2
- 5 SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD

CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE

Only the finest gaming vintages, handpicked by the GM team



This month Ben wistfully sips on **Shift 2: Unleashed**

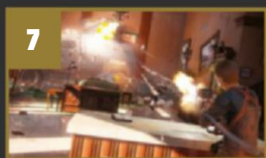
Nothing comes closer to recreating the sensation of driving than Slightly Mad Studios' volatile racer. The difference is a cockpit camera that leans when you turn the vehicle, buckles when you jostle opponents, and focuses vision on upcoming corners. You're not a static camera only able to pivot laterally, but a human experiencing high-speed forces through a fleshy body, so you feel like you're controlling the person *inside* the car rather than the car itself.



JOURNEY

PS4 / PS3

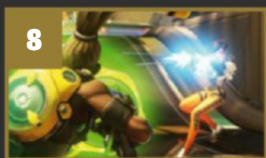
This intensely emotional trip through a strange, beautiful world is a truly spellbinding display of games as art.



UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

PS4

An incredible end to one of the most spectacular series in games.



OVERWATCH

PS4 / XO / PC

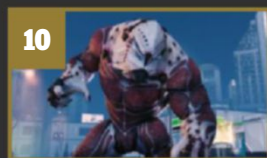
A wonderful foray into first-person shooting from the World Of Warcraft dev - essential for team players.



TOWERFALL ASCENSION

PS4 / PC / PS Vita

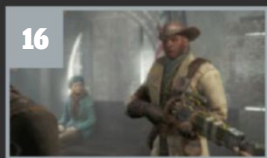
Still nothing on current-gen has come close to matching the multiplayer thrills found in this twitchy battler.



XCOM 2

PS4 / XO / PC

Turn-based strategy gold that doesn't pull its punches. Try not to get too attached to your soldiers, eh?



FALLOUT 4

PS4 / XO / PC

A hundred little improvements over its predecessor make this trip to the wasteland one worth booking.



SPLATOON

Wii U

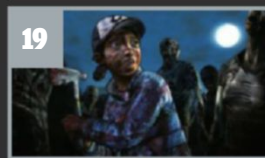
Injects more fun and colour into the online shooter genre than we ever thought possible.



STARBOUND

PC

Side-on crafting at its best. A wondrous world filled with planets to explore and furniture to plunder.



THE WALKING DEAD

PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360 / PS Vita / Mobile

Both seasons display some of the finest storytelling in videogames.



PORTAL 2

PC / PS3 / 360

Effortlessly combines pitch-perfect puzzling with perhaps gaming's best ever comedy writing.



ROCK BAND 4

PS4 / XO



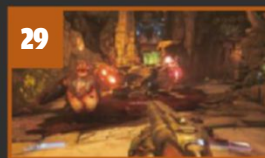
FIRE EMBLEM FATES

3DS



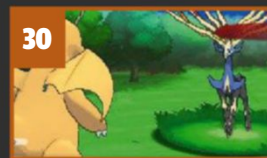
BAYONETTA 2

Wii U



DOOM

PS4 / XO / PC



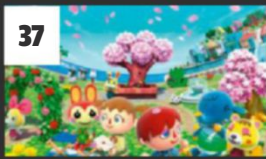
POKÉMON X & Y

3DS



ELITE DANGEROUS

XO / PC



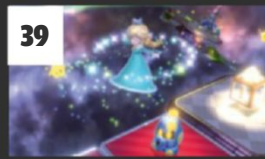
ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW LEAF

3DS



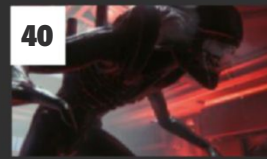
SUPERHOT

PC / XO



SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD

Wii U



ALIEN ISOLATION

PS4 / XO / PC / PS3 / 360



SALT & SANCTUARY

PS4 / PC



TOTAL WAR: WARHAMMER

PC



STELLARIS

PC



MONSTER HUNTER GENERATIONS

3DS



80 DAYS

PC / Mobile

PC

1 XCOM 2

2 HER STORY

3 STARBOUND

4 GUILD WARS 2

5 DOTA 2

3DS

1 FIRE EMBLEM FATES

2 POKÉMON X AND Y

3 ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW LEAF

4 MONSTER HUNTER GENERATIONS

5 LUIGI'S MANSION 2: DARK MOON

PS VITA

1 TEARAWAY

2 PERSONA 4 GOLDEN

3 VELOCITY 2X

4 ZERO ESCAPE: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD

5 GRAVITY RUSH

iOS

1 80 DAYS

2 FTL: FASTER THAN LIGHT

3 SORCERY 3

4 HEARTHSTONE: HEROES OF WARCAFT

5 PAPERS PLEASE

THE BIG QUIZ

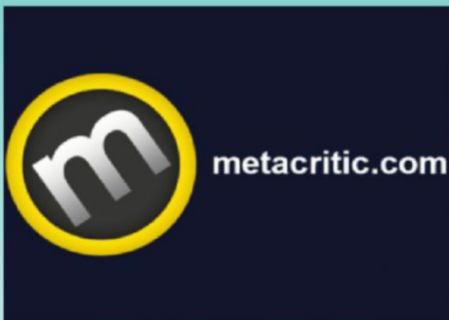
PART 3

GM

Get your thinking shoes on: it's time for a real test of your gaming knowledge

On The Record!

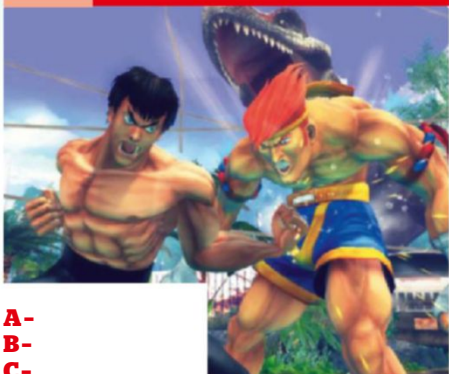
While we obviously have massive brains full of gaming know-how here on GM, we've built this quiz with the help of the fine folk over at Guinness World Records. The Guinness World Records 2017 Gamer's Edition is out now, and you can pick up a copy at your local bookshop or online for loads more gaming factoids.



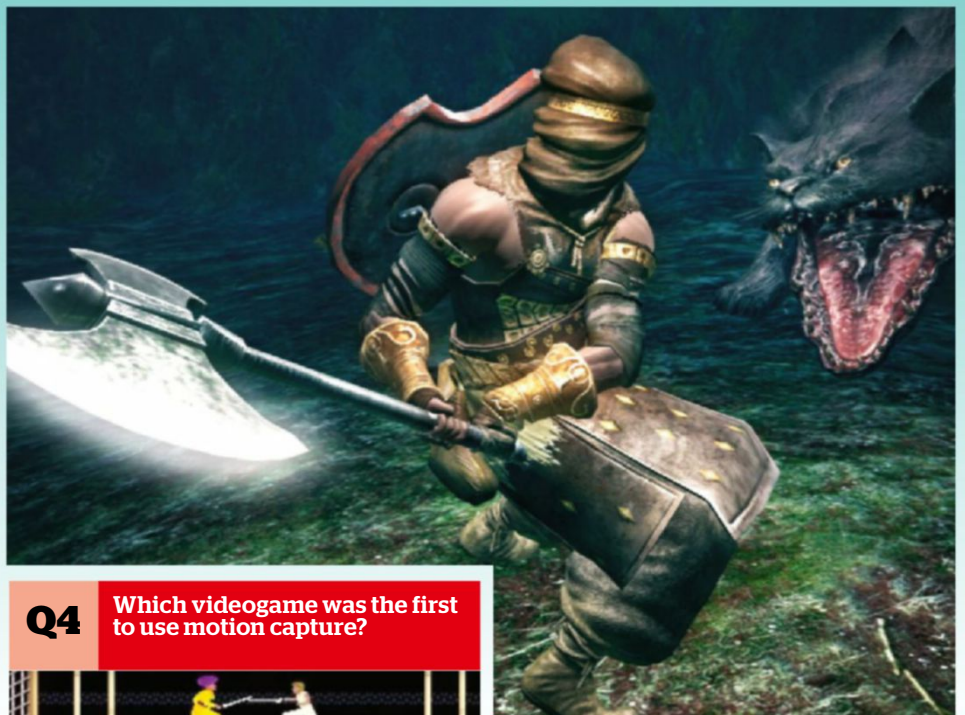
Q1 With a score of 99%, what's the most critically acclaimed game on Metacritic?

Q2 The first dedicated videogame merchandise store opened in 1998, but for which game?

Q3 What record number of viewers watched EVO 2015's Ultra Street Fighter IV final?



A-
B-
C-



Q4 Which videogame was the first to use motion capture?



Q5 Name three of nine unorthodox controllers player 'bearzly' used to complete Dark Souls.

Q6 Who is currently the world's most popular female broadcaster on Twitch?

“A Masterpiece”

- Famitsu

Steins;Gate

シュタインズ・ゲート・ゼロ

There is no end though there is a star in pain. — Kurisu
It has own power, it ruins, and it goes though there is a part also in the star. — Fuka
Only the person who was wisdom can read the most foolish one from the history.
The fish that lives in the sea doesn't know the world in the land. It also ruins and goes if they have wisdom.
It is funnier that man exceeds the speed of light than they start living in the land.
It can be said that this is an final ultimatum from the god to the people who can fight.



Coming Winter 2016

PS4

PSVITA

MAGES.

5pb.

AV

POUBE

© MAGES./ 5pb./ Chiyo st.inc. © 2009 MAGES./ 5pb./ Nitropius
Licensed to and published by POUBE Ltd.

FREE GIFTS!

DIG DUG AND CUSTOM ARCADE MACHINE INSIDE!

BUILD YOUR VERY OWN RETRO PAPERCRAFT ARCADE!



« CUT, FOLD, AND BEHOLD YOUR DESK ARCADE!

Review

The Final Verdict!

» GET EXPERT VERDICTS ON ALL THE HOTTEST NEW GAMES!

COG wild!

Gears Of War 4 is here – but can it live up to the legacy? Full verdict inside!

- » Mafia III
- » Forza Horizon 3
- » Mario Party: Star Rush
- » FIFA 17
- » Thumper
- » Destiny: Rise Of Iron
- » WWE 2K17
- » Batman: Arkham VR
- » Dragon Quest Builders

Preview

Future Hits Played Now!

» HANDS-ON WITH THE MOST EXCITING GAMES IN DEVELOPMENT!

Colossal expectations!

A decade in the making – can The Last Guardian live up to the hype?

- » Killing Floor 2
- » Battlerite
- » Divinity: Original Sin 2
- » Resident Evil 7: Biohazard
- » Fable Fortune
- » Nidhogg 2
- » Oxygen Not Included

And more!

News / Retro / Culture / Indie!

» NEWS! OPINION! SECRET INFO!

Reel talk!

The latest films based on your favourite videogames

- » Amazon's getting into games development?
- » Record-breaking Batman cosplay!
- » Celebrating Tomb Raider's 20th birthday
- » PS VR launch guide – is it worth the dosh?
- » Pokémon retrospective

» INSIDE YOUR FULLY LOADED GAMESMASTER!



1

THE BIGGEST SCOOPS!

Your reaction to the gaming stories that matter this month



2

THE BEST REVIEWS!

Independent verdicts on the biggest games across all formats



3

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE!

Extra coverage of indie games, retro, & culture